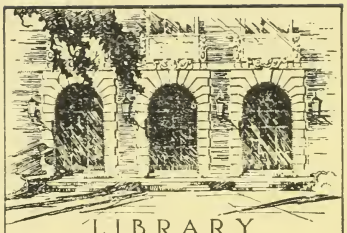

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THE

VICAR OF WREXHILL.

T. A.

BY MRS. TROLLOPE.

Mrs Frances (Milton) Trollope

AUTHOR OF

"JONATHAN JEFFERSON WHITLAW," "DOMESTIC MANNERS OF THE AMERICANS," "TREMORDYN CLIFF," &c.

Les bons et vrais dévots qu'on doit suivre à la trace
Ne sont pas ceux aussi qui font tant de grimace.
Hé, quoi! . . . vous ne ferez nulle distinction
Entre l'hypocrisie et la dévotion?
Vous les voulez traiter d'un semblable langage,
Et rendre même honneur au masque qu'au visage?

MOLIERE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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ERRATA.

VOL. I.

Page 2, line 9, *for* never seen, *read* never sear.
66, ,, 6, *from bottom*, *for* some, *read* none.
75, ,, 11, *for* himself, *read* herself.
90, ,, 3, *from bottom*, *for* pine, *read* nine.
103, ,, 3 ,, *delete* of, *before sweethearts*.
137, ,, 7 ,, *for* polite, *read* politic.
141 ,, 3, *for* bonnet, *read* baronet.

VOL. II.

Page 223, line 12, *for* than his bosom, *read* than had ever before troubled his bosom.

VOL. III.

Page 3, line 3, *for* lord, *read* land.
39, ,, *last*, *for* body, *read* lady.
101, ,, 8, *from bottom*, *for* strollen, *read* stolen.

THE

VICAR OF WREXHILL.

CHAPTER I.

THE VILLAGE OF WREXHILL.—THE MOWBRAY FAMILY.—A BIRTHDAY.

The beauties of an English village have been so often dwelt upon, so often described, that I dare not linger long upon the sketch of Wrexhill, which must of necessity precede my introduction of its vicar. And yet not even England can show many points of greater beauty than this oak-sheltered spot can display. Its peculiar style of scenery, half garden, half forest in aspect, is familiar to all who are acquainted with the New Forest, although it has features entirely its own. One of these is an overshot mill, the sparkling fall of which is

English 16 Mr 23 Pickering & Chatto 3v

accurately and most nobly overarched by a pair of oaks which have long been the glory of the parish. Another is the grey and mellow beauty of its antique church, itself unencumbered by ivy, while the wall and old stone gateway of the churchyard look like a line and knot of sober green, enclosing it with such a rich and unbroken luxuriance of foliage "never seen," as seems to show that it is held sacred, and that no hand profane ever ventured to rob its venerable mass of a leaf or a berry. Close beside the church, and elevated by a very gentle ascent, stands the pretty Vicarage, as if placed expressly to keep watch and ward over the safety and repose of its sacred neighbour. The only breach in the ivy-bound fence of the churchyard, is the little wicket gate that opens from the Vicarage garden; but even this is arched over by the same immortal and unfading green,—a fitting emblem of that eternity, the hope of which emanates from the shrine it encircles. At this particular spot, indeed, the growth of the plant is so vigorous, that it is controlled with difficulty, and has not obeyed

the hand which led it over the rustic arch without dropping a straggling wreath or two, which if a vicar of the nineteenth century could wear a wig, might leave him in the state coveted for Absalom by his father. The late Vicar of Wrexhill, however,—I speak of him who died a few weeks before my story begins,—would never permit these graceful pendants to be shorn, declaring that the attitude they enforced on entering the churchyard was exactly such as befitted a Christian when passing the threshold of the court of God.

Behind the Vicarage, and stretching down the side of the little hill on which it stood, so as to form a beautiful background to the church, rose a grove of lofty forest-trees, that seemed to belong to its garden, but which in fact was separated from it by the road which led to Mowbray Park, on the outskirts of which noble domain they were situated. This same road, having passed behind the church and Vicarage, led to the village street of Wrexhill, and thence, towards various other parishes, over a common, studded with oaks and holly-

bushes, on one side of which, with shelving grassy banks that gave to the scene the appearance of noble pleasure-grounds, was a sheet of water large enough to be dignified by the appellation of Wrexhill Lake. Into this, the little stream that turned the mill emptied itself, after meandering very prettily through Mowbray Park, where, by the help of a little artifice, it became wide enough at one spot to deserve a boat and boat-house, and at another to give occasion for the erection of one of the most graceful park-bridges in the county of Hampshire.

On one side of the common stands what might be called an alehouse, did not the exquisite neatness of every feature belonging to the little establishment render this vulgar appellation inappropriate. It was in truth just such a place as a town-worn and fastidious invalid might have fixed his eyes upon and said, "How I should like to lodge in that house for a week or two!" Roses and honeysuckles battled together for space to display themselves over the porch, and above the windows. The little

enclosure on each side the post whence swung the " Mowbray Arms" presented to the little bay windows of the mansion such a collection of odorous plants, without a single weed to rob them of their strength, that no lady in the land, let her flower-garden be what it may, but would allow that Sally Freeman, the daughter, bar-maid, waiter, gardener at the " Mowbray Arms," understood how to manage common flowers as well as any Scotchman in her own scientific establishment.

Industry, neatness, and their fitting accompaniment and reward, comfort, were legible throughout the small domain. John Freeman brewed his own beer, double and single; Dorothy, his loving wife, baked her own bread, cured her own bacon, churned her own butter, and poached her own eggs, or roasted her own chicken, when they were called for by any wandering lover of woodland scenery who was lucky enough to turn his steps towards Wrexhill. The other labours of the household were performed by Sally, except indeed the watering of horses, and the like, for which services a

stout, decent peasant-boy received a shilling a week, and three good meals a day: and happy was the cottager whose son got the appointment, for both in morals and manners the horse-boy at the Mowbray Arms might have set an example to his betters.

There are many other pretty spots and many more good people at Wrexhill; but they must show themselves by degrees, as it is high time the business of my story should begin.

The 2nd of May 1833 was a gay day at Wrexhill, for it was that on which Charles Mowbray came of age, and the fête given on the occasion was intended to include every human being in the parish, besides about a hundred more, neighbours and friends, who came from a greater distance to witness and share in the festivities.

A merrier, or in truth a happier set of human beings, than those assembled round the breakfast-table at Mowbray Park on the morning of that day, could hardly be found anywhere. This important epoch in the young heir's life had been long anticipated with gay impatience, and

seemed likely to be enjoyed with a fulness of contentment that should laugh to scorn the croaking prophecy which speaks of hopes fulfilled as of something wherein doubtful good is ever blended with certain disappointment. The Mowbray family had hoped to wake upon a joyous morning, and they did so: no feeling of anxiety, no touch of disease, no shadow of unkindness to any being who shared with them the breath of life, came to blight the light-hearted glee which pervaded the whole circle.

Charles Mowbray senior had hardly passed the prime of life, though a constitutional tendency to something like corpulency made him look older than he really was. Throughout his fifty summers he had scarcely known an ailment or a grief, and his spirit was as fresh within him as that of the noble-looking young man on whom his eyes rested with equal pride and love.

Mrs. Mowbray, just seven years his junior, looked as little scathed by time as himself; her slight and graceful figure indeed gave her almost the appearance of youth; and though

her delicate face had lost its bloom, there was enough of beauty left to render her still a very lovely woman.

Charles Mowbray junior, the hero of the day, was, in vulgar but expressive phrase, as fine a young fellow as ever the sun shone upon. His mind, too, was in excellent accordance with the frame it inhabited,—powerful, elastic, unwearying, and almost majestic in its unbroken vigour and still-increasing power.

"Aux cœurs heureux les vertus sont faciles," says the proverb; and as Charles Mowbray was certainly as happy as it was well possible for a man to be, he must not be overpraised for the fine qualities that warmed his heart and brightened his eye. Nevertheless, it is only justice to declare, that few human beings ever passed through twenty-one years of life with less of evil and more of good feeling than Charles Mowbray.

Helen, his eldest sister, was a fair creature of nineteen, whose history had hitherto been, and was probably ever doomed to be, dependant upon her affections. As yet, these had been

wholly made up of warm and well-requited attachment to her own family; but few people capable of loving heartily, are without the capacity of suffering heartily also, if occasion calls for it, and this strength of feeling rarely leaves its possessor long in the enjoyment of such pure and unmixed felicity as that which shone in Helen's hazel eye as she threw her arms around her brother's neck, and wished him a thousand and a thousand times joy!

Fanny Mowbray, the youngest of the family, wanted three months of sixteen. Poets have often likened young creatures of this age to an opening rose-bud, and it was doubtless just such a being as Fanny Mowbray that first suggested the simile. Anything more bright, more delicate, more attractive in present loveliness, or more full of promise for loveliness more perfect still, was never seen.

In addition to this surprising beauty of form and feature, she possessed many of those qualities of mind which are attributed to genius. Meditative and imaginative in no common

degree, with thoughts occasionally both soaring and profound, she passed many hours of her existence in a manner but little understood by her family—sometimes devouring with unwearying ardour the miscellaneous contents of the large library, and sometimes indulging in the new delight of pouring forth her own wild, rambling thoughts in prose or rhyme. Unfortunately, the excellent governess who had attended the two girls from the time that Helen attained her eighth year died when Fanny was scarcely fourteen; and the attachment of the whole family being manifested by a general declaration that it would be impossible to permit any one to supply her place, the consequence was, that the cadette of the family had a mind less well and steadily regulated than it might have been, had her good governess been spared to her a few years longer.

Though so many persons were expected before night to share the hospitalities of Mowbray Park, that, notwithstanding the ample size of its mansion, both the lady and her housekeeper were obliged to exert considerable skill in

arranging their accommodation, there was but one person besides the family present at the happy breakfast-table; and she was not a guest, but an inmate.

Rosalind Torrington was a young Irish girl from the province of Ulster, who had passed the first seventeen years of her life in great retirement, in a village not far distant from the coast, with no other society than the immediate neighbourhood afforded. Since that time her destiny had undergone a great change. She was an only child, and lost both father and mother in one of those pestilential fevers which so frequently ravage the populous districts of Ireland. Her father was one of that frightfully-wronged and much-enduring race of Protestant clergy, who, during the last few years, have suffered a degree of oppression and persecution unequalled for its barefaced injustice by anything that the most atrocious page of history can record.

Her mother, of high English descent, had been banished from all intercourse with her patrician family, because she refused to use her

influence with her exemplary husband to induce him to abandon his profitless and often perilous preferment in Ireland, where he felt he had the power as well as the will to do good, in order to place himself in dependence upon his wife's brother, a bachelor viscount who had invited the impoverished family to his house, and promised some time or other to do something for him in his profession—if he could. This invitation was politely but most positively refused, and for the last three years no intercourse of any kind had taken place between them. At the end of that time, Mr. Torrington and his exemplary wife, while sedulously administering to the sick souls of their poor parishioners, caught the fever that raged among them, and perished. Mrs. Torrington survived her husband three days; and during that time her thoughts were painfully occupied by the future prospects of her highly-connected but slenderly-portioned girl.

All she could do for her, she did. She wrote to her haughty brother in such a manner as she thought, from her deathbed must produce

some effect; but lest it should not, she addressed another letter to Mrs. Mowbray, the favourite friend of her youth, entreating her protection for her orphan child.

This letter enclosed a will fully executed, by which she left to her daughter whatever property she might die possessed of, (amounting at the utmost, as she supposed, to about five thousand pounds,) and constituting Mrs. Mowbray sole guardian of her person and property.

During the interval which had elapsed since Mrs. Torrington's estrangement from her noble brother, his lordship had contrived to quarrel also with his nephew and heir, and in the height of his resentment against him, made a will, leaving the whole of his unentailed property, amounting to above eighty thousand pounds, to his sister. By a singular coincidence, Lord Trenct died two days before Mrs. Torrington; so that her will was made exactly one day after she had unconsciously become the possessor of this noble fortune. Had this most unexpected event been made known to her, however, it would probably have made no other alteration in

her will than the addition of the name of some male friend, who might have taken care of the property during the minority of her child: and even this would only have been done for the purpose of saving her friend trouble; for such was her opinion of Mrs. Mowbray, that no circumstances attending her daughter's fortune could have induced her to place the precious deposit of her person in other hands.

The poor girl herself, while these momentous events were passing, was stationed at the house of an acquaintance at a few miles' distance, whither she had been sent at the first appearance of infection; and thus in the short space of ten days, from the cherished, happy darling of parents far from rich, she became an heiress and an orphan.

Rosalind Torrington was a warm-hearted, affectionate girl, who had fondly loved her parents, and she mourned for them with all her soul. But the scene around her was so rapidly and so totally changed, and so much that was delightful mixed with the novelty, that it is not wonderful if at her age her grief wore away,

and left her, sooner than she could have believed the change possible, the gay and happy inmate of Mowbray Park.

About four months had elapsed since her arrival, and she was already greatly beloved by the whole family. In age she was about half-way between the two sisters; and as she did not greatly resemble either of them in temper or acquirements, she was at this time equally the friend of both.

In most branches of female erudition Miss Torrington was decidedly inferior to the Miss Mowbrays: but nature had given her a voice and a taste for music which led her to excel in it; and so much spirit and vivacity supplied on other points the want of regular study, that by the help of her very pretty person, her good birth, and her large fortune, nobody but Charles Mowbray ever discovered deficiency or inferiority of any kind in Rosalind Torrington: but he had declared vehemently, the moment she arrived, that she was not one quarter so pretty as his sister Fanny, nor one thousandth part so angelic in all ways as his sister Helen.

Such was the party who, all smiles and felicitations, first crowded clamorously round the hero of the fête which now occupied the thoughts of all, and then seated themselves at the breakfast-table, more intent upon talking of its coming glories than on doing justice to the good things before them.

"Oh, you lucky twenty-one!" exclaimed Miss Torrington, addressing young Mowbray. "Did any one ever see such sunshine! .... And just think what it would have been if all the tents for the people had been drenched with rain! The inward groans for best bonnets would have checked the gratulations in their throats, and we should have had sighs perchance for cheers."

"I do not believe any single soul would have cared for rain, or thought for one moment of the weather, let it have been what it would, Rosalind," observed Helen. "Charles," she continued, "is so adored and doted upon by all the people round, both rich and poor, that I am persuaded, while they were drinking his health, there would not have been a thought bestowed on the weather."

"Oh! .... To be sure, dear Helen .... I quite forgot that. Of course, a glance at the Mowbray would be worth all the Mackintosh cloaks in the world, for keeping a dry skin in a storm;—but then, you know, the hero himself might have caught cold when he went out to shine upon them—and the avoiding this is surely a blessing for which we all ought to be thankful: not but what I would have held an umbrella over him with the greatest pleasure, of course .... but, altogether, I think it is quite as well as it is."

"You won't quiz my Helen out of her love for me, Miss Rosalind Torrington," replied Charles, laughing; "so do not hope it."

"Miss Rosalind Torrington!" .... repeated the young lady indignantly. Then rising and approaching Mrs. Mowbray, she said very solemnly, "Is that my style and title, madam? Is there any other Miss Torrington in all the world? .... Is there any necessity, because he is one-and-twenty, that he should call me Miss Rosalind? .... And is it not your duty, oh! my guar-

dianess! to support me in all my rights and privileges? And won't you please to scold him if he calls me Miss Rosalind again?"

"Beyond all question you are Miss Torrington, my dear," replied Mrs. Mowbray; "and were not Charles unfortunately of age, and therefore legally beyond all control, I would certainly command him never to say Rosalind again."

"That is not exactly what I said, Most Respected!" replied the young lady. "He may call me Rosalind if he will; but if I am Miss any thing, I am Miss Torrington."

"You certainly are a lucky fellow, Charles," said his father, "and Rosalind is quite right in praising the sunshine. Helen with her coaxing ways may say what she will, but our fête would have been spoilt without it."

"Indeed I think so, sir .... Pray do not believe me ungrateful. Besides, I like to see everything accord—and your bright beaming faces would have been completely out of keeping with a dark frowning sky."

"You are quite right .... But come, make

haste with your breakfast . . . let us leave the ladies to give an inquiring glance to the decorations of the ball-room, and let you and I walk down to the walnut-trees, and see how they are getting on with the tents and the tables, and all the rest of it."

"I shall be ready in a minute, sir; but I have been scampering round the whole park already this morning, and I am as hungry as a hound. Give me one more egg, Helen, and then . . . ."

"It is really a comfort to see what a fine appetite he has!—is it not, Helen?" said Rosalind, surrounding his plate with rolls of all sorts and sizes.

"I will call you '*Wild Irish Girl*' in the very midst of the ball this evening if you do not behave better," said young Mowbray.

"And if you do, I will . . . ."

"Come along, Charles," said his father; "her threats may put you out of heart for the whole day."

"And might not we too take a walk before any of the people arrive?" said Fanny. "I

have heard the cuckoo this morning for the first time. He was certainly thanking God for the sunshine; and I really think we ought to go out, and then we shall do so too."

"A most delightful proposal!" cried Rosalind; "and if the birds should happen to introduce a jig movement, we can practise our dancing steps as we go along."

"Wait half an hour for me," said Charles, rising to accompany his father, "and I will join your party. Let us go to the Pebble-Ford, Rosalind; and you shall all three drink my health out of that clear pool beside it, that Ros .... Miss Torrington—admired so much the other day."

"No, no, we can't wait a moment, Char..... Mr. Mowbray—" said Rosalind. "Come, dear girls, let us be gone instantly."

"Not wait for him on his birthday!" cried Helen. "But you are not in earnest, Rosalind?"

"How you do labour and toil to spoil that man, Helen!" said Miss Torrington, raising her hands and eyes as he left the room. "It is a

great blessing for him that I am come amongst you! If anything can save him from utter destruction, it is I shall do it."

Charles however was waited for, and that for at least three times the period he had named; but he came at last, and the walk was taken, and the birds sang, and the brook sparkled, and the health was drunk cordially, even by Rosalind; and the gay party returned in time to see the first carriage approach, bearing guests invited to be present at the tenants' dinner in the Park. Their morning toilet was hastily readjusted, as another and another equipage rolled onwards towards the house; and then the business of the day began. Lords and ladies, knights and squires, yeomen and peasants, were seen riding, driving, running, and walking through the spacious park in all directions. Then followed the rustic fête, and the joyous carouse, in which the name of Charles Mowbray made the welkin ring; and then, the company having retreated to the house, came the hurried steps of a dozen lady's-maids hastening to their various

scenes of action, and valets converting closets of all sorts and sizes into dressing-rooms for unnumbered gentlemen ; and then the banquet, and then the coffee and the short repose—and then the crowded ball.

All this came and went in order, and without the intervention of a single circumstance that might mar the enjoyment of a day long set apart for happiness, and which began and ended more exactly according to the wishes and intentions of those who arranged its festivities than often falls out at galas planned by mortals.

At five o'clock on the following morning the joyous din at length sank into silence, and as many as hospitable ingenuity could find room for lay down at Mowbray Park to enjoy again in dreams the untarnished gaiety of that happy day.

CHAPTER II.

THE MORNING AFTER THE BIRTHDAY.

Even the stable-boys deemed themselves privileged to sleep later than usual on the day after; and the ploughboy, as he went afield, missed the merry smile of the Park dairy-maid, who, like her superiors, seemed to think on such an occasion time was made for very vulgar souls indeed, and that none who had joined in so illustrious a gala could be expected to recover the full possession of their waking senses for some hours after the usual time.

By slow degrees, however, the different members of the establishment began to stretch themselves and give sign of reviving animation. The housemaids yawningly opened the window-shutters; the footmen crept after them to aid in removing from one room at least the traces

of the jubilee, which, like the relics of a lamp that has burnt out, showed but the more unsightly from its past splendour; and at length, to a superficial eye, the breakfast-room looked like the breakfast-room of former years; though a more discriminating glance might have detected girandoles where no such things had ever glittered before, card-tables in the place of work-tables, and flowers, still blooming in situations as little usual to them as a bed of strawberries would have been the day before.

But it was long after these hireling efforts of forced labour had prepared the table for the morning meal, that any one of the favoured sleepers destined to partake of it left his or her downy pillow .... In short .... it was past mid-day before the family and their guests began to assemble; and even then many stragglers were still waited for before they appeared, and Mrs. Mowbray and Helen began at length to talk of breaking up the long session, and of giving orders to the butler to take care of all those who should come after.

" It is not very surprising that the Davenports, who never ceased dancing till long after

the sun came to look at them," said Helen,—"it is not at all wonderful that they should sleep late, and I believe Mr. Vivian makes it a principle to be the last on all occasions. But I am quite astonished that papa does not appear: was he asleep, mamma, when you came down this morning?"

"No, Helen, not quite asleep, for he spoke to me. But I think he was very sleepy, for I hardly understood what he said; and as he appeared extremely tired when he went to bed, I told Curtis to darken the room again and leave him quiet."

Another half-hour brought forth the Davenports and Mr. Vivian; but still Mr. Mowbray did not appear, and Helen, though hitherto she had been quite satisfied by her mother's account of his prolonged slumbers, again began to feel uneasy about him.

"Do you not think, mamma," said she, "that I might venture to go up to him?"

"I see not the least objection to it, Helen; especially as we know that if it were you who happened to wake him out of the soundest

sleep he ever enjoyed, the pleasure of seeing you near him would quite atone for it."

"Very well, mamma,—then I shall certainly let him sleep no longer now;" and so saying, Helen left the room.

"Is not Helen Mowbray a charming creature!" said a gentleman who was seated next Miss Torrington, and who, being neither young, handsome, rich, nor noble, felt that he could wound no feelings by expressing his admiration of one young lady to another.

"I will tell you what she is," answered Rosalind warmly: "she is just as much better than everybody else in the world, as her sister, there, is more beautiful."

"And you are . . . ." said the middle-aged gentleman, fixing a pair of very intelligent eyes on her face,—"you are . . . ."

But notwithstanding the look of curiosity with which Miss Torrington listened, the speaker suddenly stopped, for a bell was rung with that sort of sudden and continued vehemence which denotes haste and agitation in the hand that gives it movement.

"That is my father's bell!" said Charles in an accent of alarm; and starting up, he was out of the room in an instant.

Mrs. Mowbray immediately followed him, and for several minutes a sort of heavy silence seemed to have fallen on every individual present—not a word being uttered by any one, and the eyes of all fixing themselves on the face of Fanny, who kept her place as if spell-bound, but with a countenance that expressed a feeling approaching to terror.

"This is not to be borne!" exclaimed Rosalind abruptly. "Excuse us for a moment," she added, addressing those who still remained in the breakfast-room.—"Come with me, Fanny, and let us know the worst at once."

The two girls left the room together; and in a very few minutes afterwards a servant entered, the violent agitation of whose manner announced the news he brought before he spoke it.

"My master . . . . my poor master is dead!" were the words he uttered; and their effect upon a party assembled for an occasion of so much

festivity, and who had so lately parted with their kind and happy host in perfect health, may be easily imagined.

One single word in reply to the eager chorus of inquiry told the manner of his death—

"Apoplexy!"

The scene which followed was what such an event must necessarily produce. No single creature present, except one pretty portionless young lady who thought it very likely that Mr. Charles might now fall in love with her, could by possibility be benefited by the death of the amiable man who had just breathed his last, and it is therefore probable that the universal expression of regret was sincere in quality, though its quantity might have been somewhat preternaturally increased by the circumstances in which the parties were relatively placed when the awful event was made known. Several tears were shed and some glasses of cold water called for while the carriages were getting ready; the gentlemen all looked grave, and many of the ladies pale; but in less than half an hour they had all left the house, not one

of them, as it happened, being on terms of sufficient intimacy with the family to justify their offering to remain at such a moment.

It is easy enough to dismiss from the scene persons whose feelings were so slightly interested in it; but far different would be the task were I to attempt painting the heartfelt anguish of those who remained. Mr. Mowbray had been so deeply yet so tranquilly loved by every member of his family—his intercourse with them had been so uniformly that of constant endearment, unchequered by any mixture of rough temper or unreasonable caprice, that their love for him was so natural and inevitable, that they had never reasoned upon it, or were fully aware of its intensity, till the dreadful moment in which they learned that they had lost him for ever.

The feelings of Mrs. Mowbray for many hours amounted to agony; for till a medical gentleman who examined the body at length succeeded in convincing her that she was mistaken, she felt persuaded that her beloved husband owed his death to her neglect, and that if, when

she mistook his unintelligible speech for sleepiness, she had discovered his condition and caused him to be bled, his precious life might have been saved. It was evident, however, from many circumstances, that the seizure was of a nature not to be baffled or parried by art; and the relief this conviction at length afforded the widow was so great, that her having first formed a contrary opinion was perhaps a blessing to her.

The grief of Charles was that of a young, ardent, and most affectionate spirit; but his mother and his sisters now seemed to hang upon him wholly, and the Being who alone can read all hearts only knew how deep was the sorrow he felt. The young Fanny, stealing away to her chamber, threw herself in an agony of tears upon her bed, and, forgotten in the general dismay that had fallen upon all, wept herself into a sleep that lasted till she awakened on the following morning to a renewed sense of sorrow which came over her like the dreadful memory of some frightful dream.

But of all those whom poor Mowbray had

left to deplore his loss, it was Helen—his darling Helen—who unquestionably felt it the most profoundly. His love for her had all that is most touching in partiality, without one atom of the injustice which renders such a feeling criminal; and its effect upon her loving and enthusiastic temper was stronger than any words can describe.

Miss Torrington was perhaps beyond any other member of the family aware of this, and the tenderest pity for the silent, suffering Helen took possession of her. She was in truth a looker-on upon the melancholy scene, and as such, was more qualified to judge how sorrow worked in each of them than any other could be. Her residence in the family, though sufficient to impress her with the kindest feelings towards its chief, and the deepest impression of his worth, had hardly been long enough to awaken thoroughly her affections towards him, and she wept more in pity for those around her than from any personal feeling of grief for the loss she had herself sustained. To soothe poor Helen, to lead her thoughts even for a moment

from the subject that engrossed them, and to keep her as much as possible from gazing in vain tenderness and hopeless agony upon the body of her father, became the sole occupation of Rosalind during the dreadful interval between the real loss of the beloved being to whom the soul of his child still fondly clung, and the apparently more final separation still which took place when all that was left of him was borne from the house.

Helen made little apparent return to all these tender cares, but she was fully conscious of them. She felt that Rosalind read her heart, and knew how to pity her; and the conviction turned liking into love, of that enduring kind which such hearts as Helen's alone know how to give.

CHAPTER III.

THE VICAR OF WREXHILL.

On the day preceding that appointed for the funeral, Mrs. Mowbray received the following letter:—

"Madam,

"I trust that, as the minister of your parish, my venturing to break in upon your grief will not be considered as an intrusion. In the festivities which have ended so awfully, your hospitality invited me and my children to bear a part; and although I declined the invitation, I am most anxious to prove to you, madam, and to your family, that no deficiency of friendly feeling induced me to do so. But 'it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting,' and I now therefore ask your permission to wait on you, with the most earnest

hope that the sacred office I hold may enable you to receive me rather with a feeling of comfort than of pain. Be assured, madam, that short as the period of my ministry in the parish of Wrexhill has been, it is with deep sympathy in the grief that afflicts you that I subscribe myself, madam,

"Your humble servant and friend,

"William Jacob Cartwright.

"Wrexhill Vicarage, May 9th, 1833."

Little calculated as this letter may seem to excite violent emotion, it threw poor Mrs. Mowbray into an agony of renewed grief. The idea of seeing for the first time since her loss a person who, however well-meaning in his wish to visit her, must be classed as a stranger, was inexpressibly painful; and, unused to encounter difficulty or inconvenience of any kind, she shrank from receiving Mr. Cartwright with a degree of weakness which made her son, who had seldom left her side, tremble to think how little she was calculated to endure with firmness the desolation that had fallen upon her.

"Oh! no! no! no!" she exclaimed vehemently, "I cannot see him—I can see no one! —keep him from me, Charles,—keep every one from me, if you would not see me sink to the earth before your eyes!"

"My poor mother! . . ." said Charles, tenderly taking her hand, "do not let me see you tremble thus—you will make me tremble too! and we have need of strength—we have all great need of strength in this time of trial."

"But you will not let this clergyman come to me, Charles? . . . . Oh, no! you cannot be so cruel!"

"The very weakness which makes you shrink from this, my dearest mother, is the strongest proof that such a visit should be sought, and not avoided. Where, mother, are we any of us to look for the strength we want, except from Him whose minister now seeks to comfort us?"

"He cannot comfort me! . . . . Can you, can Helen, can my pretty Fanny comfort me? . . . . Then how should he? . . . . Charles, Charles, there is no comfort in seeing this strange man; you cannot think there is: then why do you

still stand with his note in your hand as if doubtful how you ought to answer it ?"

" No, mother, I am not doubtful: my very soul seems to sink within me, when I think that he whose precepts . . . . "

Tears—copious woman-like tears choked the utterance of the athletic youth, who looked as if he could fight and conquer in any strife to which fortune or misfortune could lead him. But the softness that now mastered him came not of weakness, but of strength—strength of every feeling that might do honour to a man. For a few moments he gave way to this burst of passionate sorrow, and the mother and son wept together.

" My own dear Charles !" said Mrs. Mowbray, taking his hand and pressing it to her heart, " how could I think for a moment that you would urge me to do what was so very painful !"

" It can hardly be so painful for you to do as for me to urge it, dearest mother ; and yet I must do so . . . . because I think it right. There is no other person in the world, I think,

of what rank or station soever, for whose admittance I would plead so earnestly, unless it were one who, like this gentleman, offered to visit you as the minister of God."

Mrs. Mowbray buried her face in her handkerchief, and turned from him with a movement of impatience. At this moment, Helen, and her constant attendant Rosalind entered the room. Mr. Cartwright's note was still in Charles's hand, and he gave it to his sister, saying, " Helen, I think my mother ought not to refuse this visit; but she is very averse to it. God knows, I would not pain her for the world; but this is not a moment to refuse any one who offers to visit us as the minister of Heaven."

Helen read the note, and her pale cheeks were washed anew with tears as she did so.

" It is meant kindly," she said as she laid it upon the table; " but it is very soon for my poor mother to meet a stranger."

Rosalind's eyes rested on the folded note, and some feeling suggested by the consciousness that she too was almost a stranger

brought a flush to her cheek, and led her to step back towards a distant sofa. Whether Charles observed or understood the movement, she knew not; but he followed and placed the letter in her hand.

The words of Helen seemed to comfort her mother for she again looked up, and addressing Charles almost reproachfully, said,

"Your sister Helen thinks as I do, Charles: it would almost be an outrage against decency to receive a stranger on such a day as this."

"Had the request to wait upon you come from our late clergyman, mother, would you have refused it?"

"Certainly not: but he was a friend of long standing, not a stranger, Charles."

"But had he not been a clergyman, mother, you would hardly have wished him to choose such a time to make a visit here; and our not having yet become familiar with Mr. Cartwright in the common intercourse of society, seems to me no sufficient reason for refusing to

see him in the sacred character in which he has offered to come . . . . "

Some powerful emotion checked his utterance; but in a moment he added,

" I would wish once more to pray beside my father before he goes hence to be no more seen by us on earth."

" Mother! . . . ." cried Helen, dropping on her knees and throwing her arms round her.

The appeal was answered by an embrace in which their tears mingled, and poor Mrs. Mowbray, whose aching heart seemed to dread every new emotion, said, while something like a shudder ran through her frame, " Do with me as you will, my children . . . . I cannot bear much more . . . . But perhaps it would be better for me that I should sink to rest beside him!"

" My dearest friend!" exclaimed Rosalind, coming softly towards her and impressing a kiss upon her forehead, " you have not lost all for which you might wish to live."

" Oh, true . . . . most true! . . . . Where is

my poor Fanny, Rosalind? You will answer this letter for me, Charles? . . . . I will be ready to see Mr. Cartwright whenever he chooses to come . . . . It will be a dreadful trial —but I am willing to endure it."

The young man left the room, and such an answer was returned to the clergyman's note as brought him to the door within an hour after it was despatched.

Rosalind, in obedience to Mrs. Mowbray's hint, had sought Fanny in her chamber, where she seemed to find a sad consolation in versifying all the tender recollections of her lost father that her memory could supply; but she instantly obeyed the summons, and when Mr. Cartwright arrived, the whole family were assembled in the drawing-room to receive him.

The person, voice, and address of this gentleman were singularly well calculated to touch and soothe hearts suffering from affliction; and after the first painful moment in which they raised their eyes to meet those of the first stranger who had been admitted

to look upon their sorrow, there was nothing in the interview to justify the terror with which the thought of it had inspired the poor widow.

Either from tact or feeling, Mr. Cartwright seemed to avoid speaking to Mrs. Mowbray, and it was to her son that he addressed such words as the occasion called for. Meanwhile, from time to time his eyes rested with gentle pity on the three beautiful girls, whose tears flowed silently as they listened to him.

But though the manner of Mr. Cartwright was full of the tenderest kindness, it was apparently embarrassed. He evidently feared to touch or to dwell upon the agonising subject which occupied all their thoughts, and it was Charles who had the courage to turn this melancholy meeting to the only purpose for which it could be desirable, by saying—though with a faltering voice,—

"Mr. Cartwright . . . . . may we ask you to pray with us beside the coffin that contains the body of my father?"

The clergyman started, and his countenance

expressed a mixture of satisfaction and surprise, his manner instantly became more solemn—more devout, and he replied eagerly, rising from his chair as he spoke, as if willing to hasten to the scene to which he was called,

"Most gladly—most joyfully, my dear sir, will I kneel with you and your amiable family to implore the divine grace. I did not know . . . . I had hardly dared to hope . . . . Indeed I feared from the festivities . . . . from the style in which . . . . ."

"I trust, sir," interrupted young Mowbray almost in a whisper, "that you do not suppose us unused to prayer, because we have rejoiced in the blessings which Heaven has bestowed?"

"I thank my God and Saviour that it is not so," replied the clergyman, pressing the young man's hand affectionately; "and I will praise His holy name for every symptom I find that the world, my dear young friend, has not taken too strong a hold upon your heart. May we through His grace walk righteously together in the path in which it hath pleased Him to place us side by side!"

Charles Mowbray's heart was ever open to every expression of kindness; and now, softened by sorrow, and warmed by a feeling of the purest piety, he returned the friendly pressure with interest, and then, taking his poor mother's arm within his own, led the way to the chamber of death.

The mourning family knelt beside the coffin, and listened with suppressed sobs to an extempore prayer, by no means ill suited to the occasion, though it was not, as poor Charles had expected, chosen from among the many solemn and beautiful orisons which the Church has furnished or which the Scriptures might supply for such an hour of need. But he was not disposed at this moment to cavil at any words calculated to raise his thoughts and those of the beings he most fondly loved to that Power which had hitherto blessed their existence, and from whence alone they could hope for support under the affliction with which He had now visited them. Fervently and earnestly he prayed for them and for himself; and when he rose from his knees and again pressed his

suffering mother to his heart, it was with a feeling of renovated hope and confidence in the future protection of Heaven which nothing but prayer uttered with genuine piety can give.

Mr. Cartwright did not take his leave till he had spoken an individual blessing to each of them, which was accompanied by a pressure of the hand that seemed to express more sympathy in what each felt than any words could have done.

Young Mowbray then retired with him to arrange everything respecting the ceremony which was to take place on the morrow. His mother expressed a wish to lie down for an hour; and the three girls, after attending her to her room, carefully shutting out the light in the hope that she might sleep, and each one bidding her do so with a fond caress, retreated to the dressing-room of Helen, when their conversation naturally turned on Mr. Cartwright.

This gentleman had taken possession of the little living of Wrexhill only one month before the death of his most distinguished parishioner.

During the week which followed his first performance of duty in the church, the family at the Park made a visit at the Vicarage: for though Mr. Cartwright was a widower, he had a daughter nearly twenty years of age, who, as mistress of her father's house, was of course visited by the ladies. When this visit was returned, the Mowbray family were all absent; and during the short interval which followed before the day on which young Mowbray came of age, the preparations for the fête by which this event was to be celebrated had prevented Mr. Cartwright and his family from receiving any other invitation than that which requested their attendance at it. This having been declined, he was as nearly as possible a personal stranger to the whole Mowbray family.

"What exquisite benevolence his countenance expresses!" exclaimed Fanny: "I never saw eyes so full of gentleness."

"His eyes are remarkably handsome, replied Rosalind; "but I am not quite sure that I like him."

"The moments we passed with him were

moments of agony," said Helen: "it would hardly be fair to pronounce any judgment upon him from such an interview."

"Perhaps you are right, dear Helen, and I will endeavour to suspend mine," replied Rosalind. "But at least I may venture to remark that he is a very young-looking father for the full-grown son and daughter we have seen."

"I do not think he can be their father," observed Fanny. "Perhaps he is only the husband of their mother? . . . . . Don't you think that is most likely, Helen?"

"I don't know, dear," answered Helen: "I believe I hardly saw him."

"I really doubt if you did, my poor Helen," said Rosalind; "but if he speak sooth, he could not say the same of us. If the reverend gentleman be given to sketching of portraits, he might, I think, produce a good likeness of either of us, for, like Hamlet when he looked at Ophelia, 'he fell to such perusal of our faces, as he would draw them' . . . . . I do not think I shall like this Mr. Cartwright . . . . I do not

mean now, Helen ; I speak only of what I think I shall do when I know more of him."

" Do you call that suspending your judgment, Rosalind?" said Helen with a feeble smile.

" Well, then, do not try to make a hypocrite of me, dearest : it will never answer. Wisdom is of too slow a growth for my little unprofitable hotbed of an intellect, which forces every thought to run up to full growth, lanky and valueless, as soon as it is sown. But by-and-by you shall transplant some of my notions, Helen, into the fine natural soil of your brain; and then, if they flourish, we shall see what they are really worth."

For all reply, the pale Helen shook her head, as one who knows not well what has been said to him ; and the conversation languished and dropped, as every other had done since the blow had fallen which had levelled her young and joyous spirit to the dust.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WILL.

The day which saw the honoured remains of Mr. Mowbray committed to the tomb was one of dreadful suffering to his family, and to none more than to his son, who, with a heart swelling with the most genuine grief, was obliged to assume the garb of ceremony, and do the now gloomy honours of the mansion to many of the same friends and neighbours who had so recently received the joyous greeting of his father. Most thankful was he for the relief which followed the departure of the last of those who came to do honour to these splendid obsequies; and most soothing was it to his wounded and weary spirits to find himself once more surrounded only by those who could read in a look all he wished to express, and who required no welcome to share in the sorrow of that bitter day.

But, like all other periods of human life, whether marked by sorrow or by joy, it passed away with as even and justly-measured a pace as if no event distinguished it from its fellow days; and then, by slow but sure degrees, the little trifling ordinary routine of daily circumstance came with its invisible and unnoticed magic, to efface, or at least to weaken, feelings which seemed to have been impressed by the stamp of burning iron on their souls.

Charles Mowbray had not yet taken his degree, and wishing to do so as soon as possible, he was anxious to return to Christ Church without delay; but his father's will had not yet been opened, and, at the request of his mother, he postponed his departure till this could be done. This important document was in the hands of Sir Gilbert Harrington, an intimate friend and neighbour, who being in London at the time of Mr. Mowbray's death, had been unable to obey the summons sent to him in time to attend the funeral; but within a week after, he arrived, and the following morning was fixed upon for this necessary business.

The persons present were Sir Gilbert Harrington, Mr. Cartwright, a respectable solicitor from the country town who had himself drawn the instrument, and Charles Mowbray.

It was dated rather more than ten years back, and, after the usual preamble, ran thus:

"In order that my children, or any other persons whom it may concern, may know the reason and motive of the disposition of my property which I am about to make, it is necessary that I should therewith state the manner of my marriage with Clara Helena Frances, my dearly-beloved wife. Notwithstanding her vast possessions, I wooed and married her solely because I loved her; and this she had the generosity to believe, though I was nearly penniless, having nothing but my true affection and good blood to offer in return for all the wealth she brought. For several months she withstood my earnest solicitations for an immediate union, because, had she married before she became of age, her guardian would have insisted upon settlements and restrictions,

which would have deprived me of all control over her property; nor would she subsequently sign any document whatever previous to her marriage, thereby rendering me the sole possessor of her fortune. WHEREFORE, to show my sense of this unparalleled confidence and generosity, I hereby make her the sole inheritrix of all I possess, to be ultimately disposed of according wholly and solely to her own will and pleasure." . . . . . And then followed, with every necessary and unnecessary technicality of the law, such a disposition of his property as left his children entirely dependant on their mother both for their present and future subsistence.

That this will was very different from anything that Charles Mowbray expected, is most certain, and there might perhaps have been some slight feeling of disappointment at finding himself dependant even upon his mother; but if such there were, it was not sufficiently strong to prevent his doing justice to the noble feeling which had led to it; and, in truth, he

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felt so certain of the fond affection of his mother, that not a shadow of fear either for his own interest or that of his sisters crossed his mind.

The lawyer who read aloud the deed he had penned, had of course no observation to make upon it, and Mr. Cartwright only remarked that it was a proof of very devoted love and confidence.

Of the small party present at this lecture, Sir Gilbert Harrington was the only one who testified any strong emotion respecting it; and his displeasure and vexation were expressed in no very measured terms. His warmth was at length checked, not because he had uttered all he had to say, but because he met the eye of Mr. Cartwright fixed upon him with a sort of scrutiny that was unpleasing to his feelings. He therefore stopped short in the philippic he was pouring forth upon the infernal folly of a man's acting in matters of importance without consulting his friends, and taking the arm of Charles, walked through the hall into the grounds without appearing to remember that

as he was left joint executor with Mrs. Mowbray to the will, it might be expected that he should make some notification of its contents to her before he left the house.

"Shall we not speak to my mother, Sir Gilbert?" said Mowbray, endeavouring to restrain the eager step of the baronet as he was passing through the hall-door.

"No, sir," was the laconic reply; and on he stalked with a more rapid step than before.

The conversation which passed between them during the hour which intervened before Sir Gilbert clambered up to his saddle and galloped off, was made up of something between lamentation and anathema on his side, and the most earnest assurances that no mischief could ensue from his father's will on the part of Charles. The testy old gentleman could not, however, be wrought upon to see the widow who, as he said, must have used most cursed cunning in obtaining such a will; of which, however, poor lady, she was as innocent as the babe unborn; and he at length left the Park,

positive that he should have a fit of the gout, and that the widow Mowbray would marry within a year.

As soon as he had got rid of his warm-hearted but passionate old friend, Mowbray hastened to repair the neglect he had been forced into committing, and sought his mother in the drawing-room. But she was no longer there.

The room, indeed, appeared to be wholly untenanted, and he was on the point of leaving it to seek his mother elsewhere, when he perceived that Miss Torrington was seated at the most distant corner of it, almost concealed by the folds of the farthest window-curtain.

"Rosalind!" . . . . he exclaimed, "are you hid there? . . . . Where are all the rest? and how come you to be left alone?"

"I am left alone, Mr. Mowbray . . . . because I wished it. Helen and Fanny are with your mother, I believe, in her room."

Charles wished to see them all, and to see them together, and had almost turned to go; but there was something in the look and man-

ner of Rosalind that puzzled him, and going up to her, he said kindly, "Is anything the matter, Rosalind? You look as if something had vexed you."

To his great astonishment she burst into tears, and turning from him as if to hide an emotion she could not conquer, she said, "Go, go, Mr. Mowbray — go to your mother — you ought to have gone to her instantly."

"Instantly? . . . . When? . . . . What do you mean, Miss Torrington?"

"Miss Torrington means, Mr. Mowbray, that it would in every way have been more proper for you to have announced to your mother yourself the strange will it has pleased your father to leave, instead of sending a stranger to do it."

"Who then has told her of it, Rosalind? Was it the lawyer? was it Mr. Humphries?"

"No, sir—it was Mr. Cartwright."

"But why should you be displeased with me for this, dear Rosalind? Sir Gilbert led me out of the library by force, and would not let me go to my mother as I wished to do, and

I have but this instant got rid of him; but I did not commission either Mr. Cartwright or any one else to make a communication to her which I was particularly desirous of making myself."

"You did not send Mr. Cartwright to her?" said Rosalind, colouring, and looking earnestly in his face.

"No, indeed I did not Did he say I had sent him?"

"How very strange it is," she replied after a moment's consideration, "that I should be perfectly unable to say whether he did or did not! I certainly do not remember that he explicitly said 'Madam, your son has sent me here;' but this I do remember—that somehow or other I understood that you had done so."

"And how did he announce to my mother that she . . . . I mean, how did he communicate to her the purport of my father's will?"

"Charles Mowbray!" exclaimed Rosalind passionately, clenching her small hands and stamping her little foot upon the ground — "I may be a very, very wicked girl: I know I

am wilful, headstrong, obstinate, and vain; and call me also dark-minded, suspicious, what you will; but I do hate that man!"

"Hate whom, Rosalind?" said Charles, inexpressibly astonished at her vehemence. "What is it you mean? . . . . Is it Mr. Cartwright, our good friendly clergyman, that you hate so bitterly?"

"Go to your mother, Mr. Mowbray. I am little more than seventeen years old, and have always been considered less instructed, and therefore sillier of course than was to be expected even from my age and sex; then will it not be worse than waste of time to inquire what I mean — especially when I confess, as I am bound to do, that I do not well know myself? . . . . Go to your mother, Charles, and let her know exactly all you feel. You, at least, have no cause to hide your faults."

"I will go — but I wish I knew what has so strangely moved you."

"Ask your sisters—they saw and heard all that I did; at least, they were present here,

as I was;—ask them, examine them, but ask me nothing; for I do believe, Charles, that I am less to be depended on than any other person in the world."

"And why so, my dear Rosalind?" replied Mowbray, almost laughing. "Do you mean that you tell fibs against your will?"

"Yes . . . . I believe so. At least, I feel strangely tempted to say a great deal more than I positively know to be true; and that is very much like telling fibs, I believe."

"Well, Rosalind, I will go, for you grow more mysterious every moment: only, remember that I should greatly like to know all the thoughts that come into that strange little head of yours. Will you promise that I shall?"

"No," was the ungracious reply; and turning away, she left the room by a door that led into a conservatory.

On entering his mother's dressing-room, Mowbray found her seated between her two daughters, and holding a hand of each.

She looked up as he entered: the traces of

tears were on her cheeks, and her eyes rested on him with an expression of melancholy reproach such as he had never read in them before.

"My dear, dear mother!" he exclaimed as he approached her, "has my absence then vexed you so grievously? . . . . I could not help it, mother; Sir Gilbert literally made me his prisoner."

"Sir Gilbert, Charles, might have shown more respect to the memory of the friend he has lost, than by keeping his son to listen to his own wild invectives against the wife that friend so loved and trusted."

"Whoever has repeated to you the hasty expressions of Sir Gilbert, my dear mother, in such a manner as to leave a painful impression on your mind against him, has not acted well. You know his temper, but you know his heart also; and I should not have thought that it could have been in the power of any one to make you doubt the real friendship of Sir Gilbert for us all."

"Surely, Charles, it was no symptom of

friendship to me, to say that your dear father had made an accursed will !"

" Good heavens ! . . . . what a strange misrepresentation, mother ! . . . . and all hanging, as it should seem, upon one little syllable ! . . . . Our friend, as you well know, is what Rosalind calls a manish man ; he denies the supremacy of woman, and might, and I verily believe did say, that a will which vested power in her must be a cursed will. But we know too well his long-licensed coarseness of expression to greatly marvel at that ; but for the solemn and most awful word ac-cursed, believe me, mother, he never said it."

" It matters little, my dear son, what particular words of abuse Sir Gilbert uttered against me, provided that your heart did not echo them."

" Mother ! dearest mother !" cried Helen, rising and going towards her brother, who seemed petrified at the words he heard, " how for a single moment could you believe that Charles's heart could echo any word that spoke not honour and love towards you !"

" He might have been mistaken, Helen," re-

plied her mother with a heavy sigh: "Charles could not indeed suspect that the mother his dear father so fully trusted should prove unworthy of the trust.—But let us quit this painful theme; and believe me, my children, that the first wish of my heart is to prove myself worthy of his trust and your love."

"Such words are just what we might expect to hear from you, mother," said Mowbray, "were any profession from you to us necessary; but I would gladly forget that you have ever thought such an assurance called for."

He bent down and kissed her fervently; and then, making a sign to Helen, who seemed about to follow him, that she should remain where she was, he walked out for a couple of hours among the darkest thickets he could find, with more of melancholy feeling than had ever before rested on his spirits.

CHAPTER V.

THE ARISTOCRACY OF WREXHILL.

THERE was no longer anything to prevent Charles Mowbray's return to Oxford, and the following day the time of his departure was canvassed, and at length fixed for the early part of the following week. During the few days that intervened, Mrs. Mowbray seemed quite to have forgotten their painful conversation respecting the will; she resumed all her former confiding tenderness of manner, and told him before they parted, that henceforward his liberal allowance would be doubled.

The day preceding his departure was Sunday, and for the first time since their heavy loss the whole family appeared at church. They had all dreaded the moment of reappearing before the eyes of the little village world, and of thus giving public notice, as it

were, that they no longer required to be left to mourn in secret: but this painful ceremony came, and was endured, like those that had preceded it; and poor Helen, as she laid her head upon her pillow, exclaimed, "What is there that we could not bear, and live."

The sad parting of the next morning having also passed over them, they at once, and by necessity, fell into the mode of life which they were hereafter to pursue. But dreary and heavy was the change that had fallen on them, and it was long ere the mere act of assembling for their daily meals ceased to be a source of suffering — for fearful was the blank left by the absence of the kind, the gentle, the beloved, the venerated being, whose voice was used to speak a blessing and a welcome over every repast. But our natures seize with avidity the healing balm which time and occupation offer: much variety of disposition was, however, manifested in the manner in which each one of the family sought the consolation they needed.

Mrs. Mowbray became evidently, though

perhaps unconsciously, better both in health and spirits from the time that her neighbours, according to their different ranks, resumed their visits of friendship, civility, and respect. She had testified outwardly, excepting to such an eye as Rosalind's, more intense suffering than any other member of the family. Nor was this in the smallest degree the result of affectation: she felt all, and more than all, that she had ever expressed, and would gladly, for the sake of her poor children, have concealed a part of it, had the fibre of her character permitted her doing so. But she was demonstrative by nature: with great softness and sweetness of temper, was joined that species of weakness which is often said to be the most attractive feature in the female character;—a weakness that induced her to seize gladly and gratefully any hand extended to lead her, and which, while it made her distrust herself, gave most sovereign sway and masterdom to any one ready and willing to supply the strength and decision of purpose which she wanted.

Many female philippics have been penned, I

believe, against that manly passion for superiority which leads our masters to covet in a companion chosen for life the temper of mind here described; but I am tempted to think that this longing to possess a being that wants protection, far from demonstrating a disposition prone to tyranny, shows a nature disposed to love and to cherish, in a manner perfectly accordant to the most perfect *beau idéal* of married life. But, on the other hand, there may perhaps be more of fondness than judgment in those who make such mallability of mind their first requisite in a choice so awfully important.

Mrs. Mowbray, however, had a thousand good qualities to justify the devoted affection of her husband. Generous, unsuspicious, and confiding, she was almost as incapable of doubting the goodness of others, as of deserving such doubts herself. Though heiress to immense property, no feeling in the slightest degree approaching to pride had even for a single instant swelled her heart; and though good, beautiful, and accomplished, her estimate

of herself was lower than that formed of her by any other human being. Her heart was now more than ever opened to every expression of sympathy and kindness, and she experienced the most salutary effects from admitting those who uttered such, yet she was still a mourner in her very heart and soul; and there were moments in which she felt so bitterly that all her youthful affections were buried and every hope of earthly happiness past, that the fair young faces of the three affectionate girls who were ready to devote themselves to her seemed too bright and beautiful to be kept within the influence of her melancholy, and she often sent them from her to their music-room, their flower-gardens, or the Park, with a sort of feverish anxiety, lest their youth and health should be sacrificed to their affection for her.

Helen had all the tenderness with some of the weakness of her mother's character. She soon ceased to speak of her father, except occasionally, when walking or sitting quite alone with Rosalind, when sheltering boughs or thickening twilight might conceal the working

features of her face even from her. At such a moment, if some kind caress from her young companion touched unawares the feelings over which she unceasingly kept guard, as if they were a secret treasure too precious to be exposed to vulgar eyes, she would from time to time give way to the sacred pleasure of discoursing on the character of the father she had lost.

But she had resumed all her former occupations, and added to them the far from unpleasing task of imparting to Rosalind much that had either been ill taught or altogether neglected in her early education. This, as well as their daily-increasing affection for each other, kept them much together, without any blameable desertion either of Mrs. Mowbray or Fanny: for the former was really wretched if she thought they confined themselves too much to her drawing-room and herself; and the latter was hourly becoming more devoted to solitary study, and to speculations too poetical and sublime to be shared by any one less romantic and imaginative than herself.

The neighbourhood was not a large one: Mowbray Park, and the estate attached to it, stretched itself so far in all directions, that Oakley, the residence of Sir Gilbert Harrington, the nearest landed proprietor, was at the distance of more than a mile. The little village of Wrexhill, however, had one or two pretty houses in it, inhabited by ladies and gentlemen of moderate but independent fortune, with whom the family at the Park associated on terms of intimacy.

Among these, the late Vicar and his family had been the decided favourites of the whole race of Mowbrays,—and most deservedly so; for the father was a man of piety, learning, and most amiable deportment; his wife, a being whose temper, to say nothing of sundry other good qualities, had made her the idol of the whole parish; and his two sons and two daughters, just such sons and daughters as such parents deserved to have. But, as Gregory Dobbs, the old parish clerk, observed after officiating at the funeral of Mr. Mowbray, "Death seemed to have taken a

spite against the village of Wrexhill, for within one short month he had mowed down and swept away the two best and *most powerful* men in the parish, and 'twas no easy matter to say how long the inhabitants might be likely to wear mourning."

The dispersion and departure of the good Vicar's family was an additional misfortune that his parishioners had not looked for. The living, more valuable for its pleasant house and pretty glebe than for its revenue, was in the gift of one who through life had been, not in appearance or profession only, but in most true sincerity the attached friend of the late incumbent; and Edward Wallace, his eldest son, was bred to the church with the express understanding that the next presentation should be his. With this persuasion, the young man's first act on the death of his father was to tell his mother and sisters that they should continue to inhabit the home they had so long loved. But this arrangement was speedily overthrown; for in reply to the letter which announced the death of his father to Sir J. C.

Blackhouse, the patron of the living, he received the following answer.

"My dear Fellow,

"As the devil would have it, I am now a cabinet minister, and I no more dare give the living to your Tory father's son, than I dare blow up Westminster Hall, or pull the Lord Chancellor's nose in public. I do assure you I am very sorry for this, for I believe you are likely to be as good a man as your excellent father, who, when he was my tutor, had certainly no notion that I should turn out such a first-rate Radical. However, there is no resisting destiny; and so here I am, just going to give my pretty little living to some Reverend Mr. Somebody that I don't care a straw about, because my Lord M—— says, that though a bit of a saint, he is a *capital clerical Whig*. I wish, Edward, you'd try to forget all the fusty old nonsense about Church and State,—upon my soul I do. By-gones are by-gones, my dear fellow; and if you could get up a clever pamphlet on the Tithe Laws, or on the Protestant

affinities to the Church of Rome, or anything else with a good rich vein of whiggery running through it, I really think I might still be able to do something for you. Do think of this, and believe me,

"My dear fellow,
"Very affectionately,
"Your friend,
"J. C. Blackhouse."

This most unlooked-for disappointment of course banished the Wallace family from Wrexhill; and the regret their departure left was so general, that it would be hardly saying too much to declare that no interference of the Whig government, however personal or tyrannical, ever produced a stronger sensation of disgust in the circle to which its influence extended than this.

It was greatly owing to the influence of Mr. Mowbray, that Mr. Cartwright, his son and daughter, were visited by the neighbourhood on their arrival; but the obvious injustice and impropriety of treating with indignity and dis-

respect the clergyman who was placed among them, solely because they would have preferred one of their own choosing, had led the benevolent owner of "the great house" to banish the painful feelings to which this unpopular appointment had given rise, and before he died, he had the satisfaction of knowing that those who looked up to him as authority had followed his example, and that the new Vicar had been called upon by all the visiting families of Wrexhill.

The handsomest house in the village was inhabited by a widow lady still young enough to be called handsome, and living with sufficient show to be supposed rich. She played a little, sang a little, sketched a little, and talked and dressed a great deal. Some people declared that when she was young, her complexion must have been as beautiful as that of Miss Fanny Mowbray: but these were only the young farmers, who did not know rouge when they saw it. This lady, whose name was Simpson, had one little girl, a pretty little creature of eight years old, who was sometimes petted and played with till

she was completely spoiled, and sometimes left in the nursery for days together, while her mamma was absorbed in the perusal of a new novel or the fabrication of a new dress.

At the next turn of the village street was the entrance to a little place of much less pretension, but infinitely prettier, and in better taste: this also was tenanted by a fair widow, who, had she not been surrounded by three daughters, all taller than herself, might have passed for being as young and as handsome as Mrs. Simpson. She was, however, as little like her as possible in every other respect, being subject to no caprice, remarkably simple in her dress, and her hair and her cheeks always remaining of the colour that pleased God. This lady had been early left a widow by the gallant and unfortunate Colonel Richards, who lost a life in a skirmish with the native troops of India which might have done honour to his country in a nobler field. What his young widow endured in returning from a remote part of the country to Madras, with her three infants and very

little means, had doubtless contributed, with the good gifts born with her, to make her what she was; for there was a firmness and strength of mind enveloped in her miniature frame, which seemed as if her brave husband had bequeathed to her the legacy of his dauntless spirit to sustain her under all the privations and misery his early death left her to encounter alone.

The character of her three girls will be easily understood hereafter.

Mrs. Richards's cottage was the only residence in Wrexhill, except the Vicar's, that did not open upon the village street, so that she had no immediate neighbour; but close to the corner of the pretty field that fronted her dwelling and fed her cow, lived a bachelor half-pay officer, who among many other excellent qualities possessed one which made him pre-eminently interesting in her eyes:—he had known Colonel Richards well, and less than half the reverence he felt for his memory has often sufficed to enrich the church of Rome with a saint. It was not Major Dalrymple's

fault if the widow of his umqwhile commanding officer had not long ago exchanged her comparative poverty for his very comfortable independence; and considering that he was five years younger than the lady, was the presumptive heir to a noble Scotch cousin who was thought consumptive, played the flute exquisitely, and was moreover a tall and gentlemanly figure, with no other fault imputed to him than a somewhat obstinate pertinacity of attachment to himself, many people both in and out of Wrexhill wondered at her obduracy, especially as she had never been heard to say, even by her most intimate friends, "that her heart was buried in the grave of her dear Richards."

The remaining aristocracy of Wrexhill need hardly be enumerated, as they will not make any very considerable figure in the following pages. But there was an attorney, an apothecary, and a schoolmaster. The latter, indeed, was an excellent person, of whom we may hear more in the sequel; but a *catalogue raisonné* of names makes but a dull chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRINCIPAL PERSON IN THE VILLAGE.—THE VICAR'S FAMILY.

Two days after the Mowbray family appeared at church, the village gentry began to offer their visits of condolence, which, happily however for the tranquillity of the persons chiefly concerned, were performed in the improved manner of modern times; that is to say, every allusion to the recent event being by all but their intimate friends most cautiously avoided by all parties.

The first person who entered the drawing-room was Mrs. Simpson. On all occasions, indeed, this lady exerted herself to sustain the position of "the principal person in the village." She seldom gave an order for "the

fly," which, weak as were its own springs, was, in truth, the main-spring of all the rural visitings; she seldom ordered this indispensable commodity without adding to her instructions, "Pray be punctual, Mr. Sims, — I say this for your sake as well as my own; for if the principal person in the village is made to wait, you may depend upon it an opposition will be started immediately, and in that case, you know, I should be obliged to give it my patronage." In like manner, the butcher and baker in the village, the ruddy-faced milkman out of it, the shoemaker, the dressmaker, the carpenter, the glazier, the dealer in small wares and all wares, were severally and collectively given to understand that Mrs. Simpson, as the principal person in the village, had a right to expect the first-fruits of their civility, attention, industry, and general stock-in-trade.

Her entrance into the presence of Mrs. Mowbray was as pregnant with sentiment and sympathy as the degree of intimacy to which she was admitted would permit. The hand-shaking

was performed with a little pressure and a little sigh; every pause in the conversation was made to speak volumes by the sad tone in which the next sentence was spoken: in short, if the minds of Mrs. Mowbray, her eldest daughter, and her ward, who kindly volunteered to sustain this ordeal with her, had not been fully occupied by the recent event, almost every word, look, and gesture of the principal person of Wrexhill were calculated to recall it.

Mrs. Simpson was accompanied by her pretty little girl, flowered and furbelowed into as near a resemblance to a bantum chicken as it was possible for a pretty little girl to take.

The distance from the village to the Park was almost too great for so young a child to walk, and the poor little thing looked heated, cross, and weary; but her mamma declared that a ramble through those delicious fields was the greatest treat in the world. "I trust in heaven," she continued, using her near-sighted

eye-glass to look at a drawing which lay on the table, " that Mimima" (her abbreviation of Jemima,) " will have my taste for sketching—I like to take her out with me, dear pet, she enjoys it so! but at this lovely season it is the most difficult thing in the world not to sketch as one goes. Indeed, when the mind is preoccupied" — (a sigh) — " every object, however" — (a pause) — " I beg your pardon, but it is so difficult —"

" Come to me, Jemima," said Helen, holding out her hand, " and let me take your bonnet off."

The child put up her shoulder and pressed with distressing closeness upon the delicate lilac of her mother's new silk dress.

" It is such a shy puss!" said Mrs. Simpson; " I often think what would become of her"— (a sigh). " I beg your pardon — but sad thoughts will press—"

" Little girl, do you love eau de Cologne?" said Rosalind, taking a bottle from the table and holding it towards her.

Either the look, the accent, or the action of Rosalind had attraction sufficient to draw the child towards her; when she good-humouredly relieved the glowing cheeks from the stifling encumbrance of a very close pink bonnet and thick green veil, and then copiously bedewed the pretty head with the fragrant and refreshing water.

"Do you like it, dear?"

"Yes, very much; do it again! again!" said the child, laughing aloud.

"Mimima! — what did I tell you, dear! Alas!—young heads—I beg your pardon —" (a sigh). "You are too good! — I fear you will spoil her, Miss Torrington."

"I am only trying to cool her a little, ma'am; she looks quite in a fever."

"She has sported along before me like a little fawn! I brought my maid and the man servant, as I thought they might carry her between them if she was tired; but she would not hear of it — the step of childhood is so elastic! — Alas! — I beg your pardon! —"

"Don't you like to ride *a-cushion*, Miss

Jemima?" said Rosalind, struck by the idea of the maid and the man carrying the young lady between them.

"What is that?" inquired the child.

Rosalind laughed a little, and coloured a little, at being obliged to explain herself; but, making the best of it, she took Mimima's little hands and interlaced them with her own, after the most approved manner of preparing to treat somebody with riding *a-cushion*.

No persons resent ridicule so much as those who are perpetually exposing themselves to it. Mrs. Simpson out glowed her rouge as she said, "I did not mean, Miss Torrington, that my servants were to carry the child together,—I really wonder such a very droll idea.—I beg your pardon— but at such a time—"

Miss Torrington looked at her for a moment, and then rose and left the room.

Mrs. Simpson saw that she had offended the heiress, and from that moment conceived towards her one of those little feminine antipathies, which if they do not as often lead to daggers and bowls in the higher ranks of so-

ciety as to black eyes and broken noses in the lower, are nevertheless seldom quite innoxious.

The conversation now began to languish, for the principal person in Wrexhill was decidedly out of humour, and Helen was painfully seeking for what she was to say next, when the door was thrown open, and Mr. and Miss Cartwright, and Mr. Jacob Cartwright, were announced.

No sudden and unexpected burst of sunshine ever produced a greater change in the aspect of a watery landscape, than the entrance of this party on the countenance of the handsome widow. Had Rosalind been present, she would have found some amusement, or at least some occupation, in seeking to discover whether it were the father or son who possessed this vivifying power. To the pale hollow-eyed daughter she would certainly have attributed no such influence. But as we have not her help to decide the doubt, we must leave the matter to the slower hand of time.

Mr. Jacob Cartwright was a tall, straight,

young man, but as yet a little inclining to that line of contour, which can only be described by the expressive word lanky. Neither was his hair handsome, for, designated as "light" by his particular friends and admirers, it was called "sandy" by the rest of the world. But the young gentleman had a finely-formed mouth, with a very beautiful set of teeth, and a large clear light blue eye, which many persons declared to be beautiful.

This young man was said to resemble greatly the mother he had lost: to his father he was certainly as unlike as possible. Mr. Cartwright, though somewhat above the middle height, was shorter than his son, and his person incomparably better built; his features were very regularly handsome, and the habitual expression of his countenance gentle and attractive. His eyes were large, dark, and very beautifully formed, and his hair and beard as black as those of a Spaniard, save here and there a silver line which about the temples began to mix itself with the sable. His mouth and teeth perhaps might have been said to re-

semble those of his son, had not the expression been so different. In the son these constituted merely a well-formed feature; to the father they seemed to give a power when he spoke that might work wonders either for good or evil.

Henrietta Cartwright resembled neither of them: of the two, she would have been said to be most like her father, because her hair and eyes were dark; but the form of the head and face, and above all, the cynic expression of the mouth, were in perfect contrast to his. Like her brother, she was extremely thin; but she was not proportionably tall, and in her this ascetic form seemed rather the result of ill health than of make. She was moreover deadly pale, and seldom spoke in general society if she could possibly avoid it.

Mrs. Mowbray received all the party with cordial kindness. In Helen's manner there was a shade of coldness, especially to the father, whose offered hand she did not appear to see; but the whole trio shared the affectionate greeting of Mrs. Simpson.

"How *very* lucky I am to meet you! Such a dismal long walk, all alone! — but now we can return together. How are you, my dear Miss Henrietta? has your headach left you? — No? — Oh, how I grieve to see you suffer so! I need not inquire for you, Mr. Jacob — what a picture of youth and activity you are! Mimima, come here. Don't you remember your friend? — don't you remember Mr. Jacob Cartwright? — Ah! I thought, you could not forget him! You would not be your mother's child, dearest, if you could ever forget kindness."

In her address to the elder gentleman there seemed to be a little more caution in the expression of her affectionate feelings; but she looked at him, and she listened to him, and more than once repeated what he said, as if to impress the precious words on her memory. In short, from the moment the Vicar and his family entered the room, it was evident the ladies of the Park were completely put

——— "In non cale;"

and this, considering the undeviating respect

which through life Mrs. Simpson had ever paid to wealth and station, was no trifling proof of the sincerity of that friendship which she professed for her new friends.

"I hope your youngest daughter is well, and Miss Torrington also?" said Mr. Cartwright.

"Quite well, thank you. Helen, do you know where your sister is?"

"In the library, I believe, mamma."

"Miss Cartwright, would you not like some refreshment? . . . . Do ring the bell, Helen. I am sure, Mrs. Simpson, you ought to take some wine-and-water after your long walk."

It was not difficult to see that this civility was the result of a strong and painful effort on the part of Mrs. Mowbray, and Helen was provoked with the whole party for not declining it; but no choice was left her — the bell was rung, and the tray arrived. One comfort she had, and that no trifling one: neither herself nor her mother had any further occasion to

seek subjects of conversation; Mrs. Simpson took the whole of this troublesome business upon herself, and for the period that the luncheon lasted was so completely engaged in eating and talking, that she had not time for a single sigh.

The two gentlemen and the little girl were very nearly as busily employed as herself; but Miss Cartwright sat silently apart, and a feeling as nearly allied perhaps to curiosity as politeness induced Helen to change her place and seat herself near her.

"Will you not take some refreshment, Miss Cartwright? . . . . Let me get you some grapes."

"I thank you—none."

"Not even a little soda-water and wine? The morning seems unusually warm."

"Nothing, I thank you."

"Are you a great walker?"

"Yes."

"This is a charming country for it—such a beautiful variety of lanes and fields."

"I seldom vary my walk."

"Indeed! And what is the favourite spot you have chosen?"

"The ugliest and most gloomy I could find, that I might be sure of never meeting any one."

Helen was silenced—she had not courage for another word, and in order to cover her retreat, moved towards the table, and bestowed her attention on the little girl, who, totally forgotten by her mamma, was quaffing long draughts of wine from a tumbler which Mr. Jacob had been preparing for himself, but which he had willingly yielded to her, and now seemed waiting for the inevitable effect of such excess with a sort of sly and covert glee that made Helen very angry.

"Your little girl will make herself ill, I am afraid, Mrs. Simpson, by the quantity of wine she is taking: I am afraid there is no water with it."

The lady, who was talking very earnestly in an under tone to Mr. Cartwright, started at this appeal, and with a glance of more anger

than the age of the child could justify, drew her back from the table and made her stand at some distance from it.

"I really think that it is Mr. Jacob Cartwright who should be punished," said Helen; "for he knew a great deal more about the matter than the little girl herself."

"Oh no! . . . . naughty little thing!"—said the mamma.

"I am very sorry if I have been the occasion of the little girl's doing what was wrong," said Mr. Jacob slowly and in a very gentle tone. "I did not think she would have taken so much; and she looked very tired and warm."

Mrs. Simpson made some civil answer, and turned to renew her conversation with the Vicar; but he was gone. She positively started, and looked about her with great interest to discover what had become of him. The windows of the room opened upon the lawn, and though she had not seen his exit, she very naturally guessed that it must have been made in that direction. After rising from the table, and making one or two unmeaning movements

about the room, taking up a book and laying it down again without looking at its title, examining a vase on the chimney-piece and a rose on the flower-stand, she gradually drew towards the open window, and after pausing for half a minute, walked through it upon the grass.

The little girl trotted after her; Mr. Jacob followed, probably hoping to see her stagger about a little; and Helen, though sadly vexed at this new device to prolong the tedious visit, could do no less than walk after them.

The conservatory, drawing-room, and library, formed this side of the house, the whole range of windows opening uniformly upon the lawn. As Helen stepped out, she perceived that the party who had preceded her were entering by the window of the library, and she quickly followed them, thinking it probable that Fanny might be startled and vexed at this unexpected interruption, when, as was very likely, she might be in the very act of invoking the "sacred pine."

Upon entering the room, however, she found her sister, to her great surprise, conversing

earnestly with Mr. Cartwright, and appearing to be hardly yet conscious of the presence of the others.

Mrs. Simpson gave a little, almost imperceptible toss of the head, at discovering how the gentleman was engaged.

"We could not think whither you had vanished, Mr. Cartwright," said she in her sweetest voice; "but you really were very lucky to ramble in this direction. Miss Fanny ought to have her picture taken in this fine room, with all her books about her."

While she said this, Mr. Cartwright continued in a whisper to finish what he was addressing to Fanny; and having done so, he turned to the party which had followed him, saying, "The bright verdure of your beautiful lawn, Miss Mowbray, tempted me out; but I hope our intrusion has not disturbed your sister?"

Fanny answered eagerly that she was very glad to see him. At that moment Helen chanced to turn her eyes towards the window by which they entered; when she perceived that

Miss Cartwright had followed them. She was, however, more than half concealed by a large orange tree which stood in a high square box beside the window; but her head was bent forward to look into the room, and a sneer of such very singular expression rested on her lip and in her eye as she looked at her father and Fanny, who were still standing close together, that Helen remained perfectly still, staring at her. In another moment Miss Cartwright changed the direction of her eyes, and encountered those of Helen fixed upon her with a look of unconcealed astonishment; but her own did not sink before them, and she turned away with a smile quite as strange and unintelligible as the look she had bestowed on Fanny.

At length this tedious visit was brought to its conclusion; the bonnet of the tipsy and now very pale little girl was replaced, a number of civil speeches spoken, and the whole party walked off together across the lawn to a gate which was to take them by a short cut through the Park.

"I quite envy Mrs. Simpson her walk home!" said Fanny. "I see she has taken Mr. Cartwright's arm: I really do think he is the very handsomest and most agreeable man I ever saw in my life!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST IMPRESSIONS MADE BY MR. CARTWRIGHT.—LETTER FROM LADY HARRINGTON.

The three girls rallied round Mrs. Mowbray as soon as the guests had departed, all kindly anxious to see how she bore this first step back into a world so wholly changed for her.

She looked pale, and there was an air of languor and weariness about her: nevertheless, to the great surprise of Helen, she expressed herself much pleased by the visit:

"Mr. Cartwright," said she, "appears to me to be one of the most amiable men I ever saw; every tone of his voice speaks kindness, and indeed, if he did not speak at all, one look of his has more feeling and pity in it than

other people could express by a volume of words."

"Do you really think so, mamma?" said Helen eagerly, but suddenly stopped herself, aware that in truth she had no grounds whatever for the strong feeling of dislike towards him of which she was conscious. She remembered, too, that her father had expressed himself greatly pleased by the urbanity of his manners, and that the last act of the benign influence he was wont to exercise on those around him had been to conquer the prejudice against him, to which the exclusion of the Wallace family had unjustly given rise. Helen remembered all this in a moment; the colour mounted to her cheeks, and she was silent.

Rosalind, too, was silent, at least from words; but her eyes could speak as many volumes at a glance as Mr. Cartwright's, and she fixed them for an instant on Helen with a look that told her plainly her prejudices against their new neighbour, however unreasonable, were fully shared by her.

Meanwhile Fanny had thrown her arms

round her mother's neck in a sort of rapture at hearing her own opinions confirmed by such authority. "Oh, how true that is, dearest mamma!" she exclaimed; "how exactly I feel the same when he speaks to me! . . . . Such goodness, such gentleness, so much superiority, yet so much humility! Poor dear Mr. Wallace was an excellent good man, certainly, but no more to be compared to Mr. Cartwright than I to Hercules!"

"How many times have you seen Mr. Cartwright, Fanny?" said Rosalind.

"I have heard him preach three times," she replied, "and they were all the most beautiful sermons in the world; and I have seen and spoken to him four times more."

"Poor Mr. Wallace!" said Rosalind. "It was he who christened you, Fanny; and from that time to the hour of his death, you seldom passed many days together, I believe, without seeing and receiving affectionate words and kind looks from him: and yet four times speaking to this gentle gentleman has driven

the memory of the poor old man from your heart!"

"No, it has not, Rosalind," replied Fanny, deeply blushing: "I am sure I did not say that, did I, mamma?—But my loving and remembering Mr. Wallace all the days of my life need not make me dislike everybody else, I suppose?"

"It would be a great misfortune to you if it did, Fanny," said Mrs. Mowbray. "I am delighted to see, both in you and many others, that the violent and most unjustifiable prejudice which was conceived against Mr. Cartwright before he was seen and known, is giving way before his amiable and excellent qualities: I have no doubt that he will soon be quite as popular in the parish as Mr. Wallace was."

"And Miss Cartwright, mamma?" said Helen; "do you think we shall love her as well as we did Emma Wallace?"

"I know nothing whatever of Miss Cartwright as yet, Helen; she appears very shy, but we must try to give her courage, my dear girls.

I hope we shall be on terms of as great intimacy with our new clergyman, as with our former one: it was a sort of association that your dear father particularly approved, and that alone is a sufficient reason for our wishing to cultivate it."

This allusion was too solemn to admit any light conversation to follow it. Mrs. Mowbray strolled with Fanny into the conservatory, and Rosalind persuaded Helen that they should find the shrubberies infinitely cooler and more agreeable than the house.

But even under the thickest cover that the grounds could offer, Helen could not be tempted fully to open her heart upon the subject of Mr. Cartwright, an indulgence which Rosalind certainly expected to obtain when she proposed the walk; but the name of her father had acted like a spell on Helen, and all that she could be brought positively to advance on the subject of the Cartwright family was, that she did not think Miss Cartwright was shy.

Within the next fortnight nearly every one who claimed a visiting acquaintance with the Mowbray family, both in the village and the

neighbourhood round it, had called at the Park.

"All the calling is over now," said Helen, "and I am very glad of it."

"Everybody has been very kind and attentive," replied her mother, "and next week we must begin to return their calls. I hope nobody will be offended, for some of them must be left for many days; the weather is very hot, and the horses must not be overworked."

"I wonder why that charming little person that I fell in love with—the widow, I mean, that lives in the cottage at Wrexhill," said Rosalind, —"I wonder she has not been to see you! She appeared to like you all very much."

"I have thought of that two or three times," replied Helen. "I think, if they had any of them been ill, we should have heard it; and yet otherwise I cannot account for such inattention."

"It is merely accidental, I am sure," said Mrs. Mowbray. "But there is one omission, Helen, that cuts me to the heart!" Tears burst from her eyes as she spoke.

Poor Helen knew not how to answer: she was well aware that the omission her mother alluded to was that of Sir Gilbert and Lady Harrington; and she knew too the cause of it. Lady Harrington, who, with one of the best hearts in the world, was sometimes rather blunt in her manner of showing it, had sent over a groom with a letter to Helen, her god-daughter and especial favourite, very fully explaining the cause of their not calling, but in a manner that could in no degree enable her to remove her mother's uneasiness respecting it. This letter, which by her ladyship's especial orders was delivered privately into the hands of Helen, ran thus:

"My darling Child!

"Can't you think what a way I must be in at being prevented coming to see you? Sir Gilbert excels himself this time for obstinacy and wilfulness. Every breakfast, every dinner, and every tea since it happened, William and I do nothing but beg and entreat that I may be permitted to go over and see your poor

mother! Good gracious! as I tell him, it is not her fault — though God knows I do think just as much as he does, that no man ever did make such a tom-fool of a will as your father. Such a man as Charles! as Sir Gilbert says. 'Twas made at the full of the moon, my dear, and that's the long and the short of it; he was just mad, Helen, and nothing else. But is that any reason that your poor dear mother should be neglected and forsaken this way? God bless her dear soul! she's more like a baby than anything I ever saw, about money; and as to her being an heiress, why I don't believe, upon my honour, that she has ever recollected it from the day she married to the time that your unlucky, poor dear distracted madman of a father threw all her money back at her in this wild way. He had much better have pelted her with rotten eggs, Helen! Such a friend as Sir Gilbert, so warm-hearted, so steady, and so true, is not to be found every day—old tiger as he is. But what on earth am I to do about it? I shall certainly go mad too, if I can't get at you; and yet, I give you my word, I no more

dare order the coachman to drive me to Mowbray Park than to the devil. You never saw such a tyrannical brute of a husband as Sir Gilbert is making himself about it! And poor William, too—he really speaks to him as if he were a little beggar-boy in the streets, instead of a colonel of dragoons. William said last night something very like, 'I shall ride over to Wrexhill to-morrow, and perhaps I shall see the family at Mow . . . .' I wish you had seen him — I only wish you had seen Sir Gilbert, Helen, for half a moment! — you would never have forgotten it, my dear, and it might have given you a hint as to choosing a husband. Never marry a man with great, wide, open, light-coloured eyes, and enormous black eyebrows, for fear he should swallow you alive some day before you know where you are. 'See them!!' roared Sir Gilbert. 'If you do, by G—d, sir, I'll leave every sou I have in the world to some cursed old woman myself; but it shan't be to you, madam,' turning short round as if he would bite me :—'laugh if you will, but go to Mowbray if you dare!'

"'But are we never to see any of the family again, sir?' said the colonel very meekly. 'I never told you so, Colonel Booby,' was the reply. 'You may see that glorious fellow Charles as often as you will, and the more you see of him the better; and I'll manage if I can, as soon as he has taken this degree that his heart's set upon, to get a commission for him in your regiment; so you need not palaver about my wanting to part you from him. And as for you, my lady, I give you full leave to kidnap the poor destitute, penniless girls if you can; but if I ever catch you doing anything that can be construed into respect or civility to that sly, artful hussy who cajoled my poor friend Mowbray to make that cursed will, may I .... You shall see, old lady, what will come of it!'

"Now what on earth can I do, dear darling? I believe your mother 's as innocent of cajoling as I am, and that's saying something; and as for your being destitute of sweethearts, you'll have fifty thousand pounds apiece if you've a farthing. I know all about the property, and so

does Sir Gilbert too; only the old tiger pretends to believe, just to feed his rage, that your mother will marry her footman, and bequeath her money to all the little footboys and girls that may ensue: for one principal cause of his vengeance against your poor mother is, that she is still young enough to have children. Was there ever such a man!—But here have I, according to custom, scribbled my paper as full as it will hold, and yet have got a hundred thousand more things to say; but it would all come to this, if I were to scrawl over a ream. I am miserable because I can't come to see your mother and you, and yet I can't help myself any more than if I were shut up in Bridewell: for I never did do anything that my abominable old husband desired me not to do, and I don't think I could do it even to please you, my pretty Helen; only don't fancy I have forgotten you: but for God's sake don't write to me! I am quite sure I should get my ears boxed.

"Believe me, darling child,

"Your loving friend and godmother,

"JANE MATILDA HARRINGTON."

"P.S. I am quite sure that the colonel would send pretty messages if he knew what I was about: but I will not make him a party in my sin. I was just going to tell him this morning; but my conscience smote me, and I turned very sublimely away, muttering, in the words of Macbeth—'Be innocent of this, my dearest chuck!'"

This coarse but well-meaning letter gave inexpressible pain to Helen. She dared not show it to her mother, who, she felt quite sure, would consider the unjust suspicions of Sir Gilbert as the most cruel insult: nor could she, after Lady Harrington's prohibition, attempt to answer it, though she greatly wished to do it, in the hope that she might be able to place her mother's conduct and feelings in a proper light. But she well knew that, with all her friend's rhodomontade, she was most devotedly attached to her excellent though hot-headed husband, and that she could not disoblige her more than by betraying a secret which, under the present circumstances, would certainly make him very angry.

But the sight of her mother's tears, and her utter inability to say anything that might console her very just sorrow, inspired Helen with a bold device. To Rosalind only had she shown Lady Harrington's letter, and to Rosalind only did she communicate her project of boldly writing to the enraged baronet himself.

"Do so, Helen," said Rosalind promptly: "it is the only measure to pursue—unless indeed you and I were to set off and surprise him by a visit."

"But my mother? . . . ." replied Helen, evidently struck by the advantages of this bolder scheme over her own,—"what would my mother say to our going?"

"If she knew of it, Helen, I suspect it would lose all favour in Sir Gilbert's eyes, and you would have no chance whatever of softening his rage towards her. The expedition, if undertaken at all, must be a secret one. When he learns it is so, I think it will touch his tough heart, Helen, for he knows, I fancy, that such escapades are not at all in your line. I only hope that he will not find out that I proposed

it, as that might lessen your merit in his eyes."

"No, no, that would do no harm. My doing it would be quite proof enough how near this matter is to my heart."

"Well, then, Helen, shall we go?"

"Let me sleep upon it, Rosalind. If we do go, it must, I think, be quite early in the morning, so as to have no questions asked before we set out. It is not a long walk. Shall we see if he will give us some breakfast?"

"A most diplomatic project!" replied Rosalind; "for it will enlist his hospitality on our side, and ten to one but the rough coating of his heart will thaw and resolve itself into a dew, as Fanny would say, by the mere act of administering coffee and hot cakes to us; and then the field is won."

"I think we will try," said Helen, smiling with a sort of inward strengthening, from the conviction that such would very probably be the result.

A few more words settled the exact time and manner of the expedition, and the friends parted to dress for dinner.

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. RICHARDS AND HER DAUGHTERS.—THE TEA-PARTY.

On the evening of that day, the three girls for the first time induced Mrs. Mowbray to go beyond the limits of the flower-garden, and walk under the avenue of beautiful elms in the Park. The simple and unostentatious tone of her character had influenced all her habits, and Mrs. Mowbray was a better and more constant walker than ladies generally who have two or three carriages ready to attend them. She appeared to enjoy the exercise from which for several weeks she had been debarred; and when the end of the avenue was reached, and Fanny almost mechanically opened the wide gate at the bottom of it, her mother passed through it without making any observation, and in truth

forgetting at that moment all that had happened since she had last done so. The gate opened upon a road, which, according to long-established custom, they crossed nearly at right angles, and then mounted and descended half a dozen steps, which conducted them into a wide and beautiful meadow, now fragrant with the new-made hay that several waggons were conveying to augment a lofty rick in a distant corner of it.

It was not till Mrs. Mowbray perceived another party seated round the base of a haycock which an empty waggon had nearly reached, that she remembered all the circumstances which made every casual meeting a matter of importance and agitation to her. The group, which seemed a very merry one, retained their places, till two stout haymakers saucily but playfully presented their pitchforks as if to dislodge them. They then started to their feet to the number of five; and the Park family recognised Mrs. Richards, her three daughters, and Major Dalrymple.

"I have not seen them yet, Helen!" said

Mrs. Mowbray with nervous trepidation:— "how very wrong I have been to come so far!"

"Why so, my dearest mother?" replied Helen. "I am sure it is less painful to meet thus, than at those dreadful visits in the drawing-room."

"But they have not called, Helen .... certainly, we had better go back."

"Dear mamma, it is not possible," said Fanny, stepping forward to meet a favourite companion in the youngest Miss Richards: "you see Rosalind has got to them already."

It was indeed too late to retreat; nor did the wish to do so last long. Mrs. Richards pressed the hand of Rosalind, who had taken hers, but, throwing it off at the same moment, hastened forward to greet the widowed friend she had wanted courage to seek. Her colour was heightened, perhaps, from feeling it possible that the cause of her absence had been mistaken; but large tears trembled in her dark eyes, and when she silently took the hand of

Mrs. Mowbray and pressed it to her lips, every doubt upon the subject was removed.

Major Dalrymple and the three girls followed; and the first moment of meeting over, the two parties seemed mutually and equally pleased to join. Mrs. Richards was the only person in the neighbourhood to whom Rosalind, during her six months' residence in it, had at all attached herself: there was something about her that had fascinated the young heiress's fancy, and the circumstance of her being the only good second in a duet to be found within the circle of the Mowbray Park visitings had completed the charm.

With the two eldest Misses Richards, Helen was on that sort of intimate footing which a very sweet-tempered, unpretending girl of nineteen, who knows she is of some consequence from her station, and is terribly afraid of being supposed to be proud, is sure to be with young ladies of nearly her own age, blessed with most exuberant animal spirits, and desirous of making themselves as agreeable to her as possible.

Louisa and Charlotte Richards were fine, tall, showy young women, with some aspirations after the reputation of talent; but they were neither of them at all like their mother, who was at least six inches shorter than either of them, and aspired to nothing in the world but to make her three children happy.

Little Mary, as her sisters still persisted to call her, approached much nearer to the stature, person, and character of Mrs. Richards: she was not quite so *mignonne* in size, but she

> "Had her features, wore her eye,
> Perhaps some feeling of her heart,"

and was, spite of all the struggles which her mother could make to prevent it, the darling of her eyes and the hope of her heart. Moreover, little Mary was, as we have before hinted, the especial friend of Fanny Mowbray.

The delights of a balmy evening in the flowery month of June—the superadded delights of a hay-field, and above all, the supreme delight of unexpectedly meeting a party of friends, were all enthusiastically descanted

upon by the two tall Misses Richards. They had each taken one of Helen's slight arms, and borne her along over the stubble grass with a degree of vehemence which hardly left her breath to speak.

"I do not think mamma is going any farther," she continued to utter, while Miss Louisa stopped to tie a shoe-string.

"Oh, but you must!" screamed Miss Charlotte, attempting to drag her onward singly.

"Stop, Charlotte! . . . stop!" cried the eldest sister, snapping off the shoe-string in her haste —"you shall not carry her away from me. What a shame! Isn't it a shame, when it is such an age since we met?"

There is nothing against which it is so difficult to rally, as the exaggerated expression of feelings in which we do not share. The quiet Helen could not lash herself into answering vehemence of joy, and having smiled, and smiled till she was weary, she fairly slipped from her companions and hastened back with all the speed she could make to the tranquil party that surrounded her mother.

The lively young ladies galloped after her, declaring all the way that she was the cruelest creature in the world.

Mrs. Mowbray now said that she hoped they would all accompany her home to tea;—a proposal that met no dissenting voice; but it was some time before the whole party could be collected, for Fanny Mowbray and little Mary were nowhere to be seen. Major Dalrymple, however, who was taller even than the Misses Richards, by means of standing upon the last left haycock at length discovered them sitting lovingly side by side under the shelter of a huge lime-tree that filled one corner of the field. He was dismissed to bring them up to the main body, and executed his commission with great gallantry and good-nature, but not without feeling that the two very pretty girls he thus led away captive would much rather have been without him; for as he approached their lair, he perceived not only that they were in very earnest conversation, but that various scraps of written paper lay in the lap of each, which at his approach were hastily exchanged,

and conveyed to reticules, pockets, or bosoms, beyond the reach of his eye.

They nevertheless smilingly submitted themselves to his guidance, and in order to prove that he was not very troublesome, Fanny so far returned to their previous conversation as to say,

"We must ask your judgment, Major Dalrymple, upon a point on which we were disputing just before you joined us: which do you prefer in the pulpit—and out of it—Mr. Wallace, or Mr. Cartwright?"

"You were disputing the point, were you?" he replied. "Then I am afraid, Miss Fanny, I must give it against you; for I believe I know Mary's opinion already, and I perfectly agree with her."

"Then I shall say to you, as I say to her," replied Fanny eagerly "that you are altogether blinded, benighted, deluded, and wrapt up in prejudice! I have great faith both in her sincerity and yours, major; and yet I declare to you, that it does seem to me so impossible for any one to doubt the superiority

of Mr. Cartwright in every way, that I can hardly persuade myself you are in earnest."

"What do you mean by *every way*, Miss Fanny?—you cannot surely believe him to be a better man than our dear old vicar?" said the major.

"We can none of us, I think, have any right to make comparisons of their respective goodness—at least not as yet," replied Fanny. "When I said *every way*, I meant, in the church and in society."

"On the latter point I suppose I ought to leave the question to be decided between you, as in all cases of the kind where gentlemen are to be tried, ladies alone, I believe, are considered competent to form the jury;—not that Mary can have much right to pronounce a verdict either, for I doubt if she has ever been in a room with Mr. Cartwright in her life."

"Yes, I have," said Mary eagerly, "and he is perfectly delightful!"

"Indeed!—I did not know you had seen him."

"Yes—we met him at Smith's."

"Oh! you saw him in a shop, did you? —and even that was sufficient to prove him delightful?"

"Quite enough!" replied Mary, colouring a little as she observed Major Dalrymple smile.

"The more you see of him, the more you will be aware of his excellence," said Fanny, coming to the aid of her friend, and with an air of gravity that was intended to check the levity of the major. "I have seen him repeatedly at the Park, Major Dalrymple, and under circumstances that gave sufficient opportunity to show the excellence of his heart, as well as the charm of his friendly, affectionate, and graceful manner."

"He has certainly been a very handsome man," said the major.

"Has been!" exclaimed both the girls at once.

"He is still very well-looking," added the gentleman.

"Well-looking!" was again indignantly echoed by the ladies.

"You do not think the term strong enough? but when a man gets on the wrong side of forty, it is, I think, as much as he can expect."

"I don't care a farthing what his age may be," cried Mary; "do you, Miss Mowbray? .... If he were a hundred and forty, with that countenance and that manner, I should still think him the handsomest and most perfect person I ever saw."

"Dear Mary!" replied Fanny affectionately, "how exactly we feel alike about him! I love you dearly for fighting his battles so warmly."

"There is surely no fighting in the case," said Major Dalrymple, laughing,—"at least not with me. But have a care, young ladies: such perfect conformity of taste on these subjects does not always, I believe, tend to the continuance of female friendship. What a sad thing it would be if those two little hands were some day to set pulling caps between their respective owners!"

"There is not the least danger of any such

dismal catastrophe, I assure you. Is there, Mary?"

"Good heavens, no!" replied little Mary in a voice of great indignation. "What a hateful idea!"

"One reason why it is so delightful to love and admire Mr. Cartwright," rejoined Fanny, "is, that one may do it, and talk of it too, without any danger that *rational people*, Major Dalrymple, should make a jest of it, and talk the same sort of nonsense that everybody is so fond of doing whenever a lady is heard to express admiration for a gentleman. But we may surely love and admire the clergyman of the parish: indeed I think it is a sort of duty for every one to do so."

"I assure you," replied the major, "that I both loved and admired Mr. Wallace exceedingly, and that I shall gladly pay the same homage to his successor as soon as I know him to deserve it. But

"Cautious age, and youth . . . .

you know the song, Mary?"

"I know your meaning, Major Dalrymple:

you are always boasting of your age; but I don't know any one but yourself who thinks so very much of . . . ."

" . . . . My antiquity and my wisdom."

"Just that . . . . But, good heavens! Fanny Mowbray, who is that to whom your mother is speaking on the lawn?"

" It is Mr. Cartwright!" cried Fanny with animation; "and now, Major Dalrymple, you will have an opportunity of judging for yourself."

"I fear not," he replied, taking out his watch; "it is now eight o'clock, and Mrs. Richards seldom walks much after nine."

The two girls now withdrew their arms, and hastened forward to the group of which Mr. Cartwright made one. Fanny Mowbray held out her hand to him, which was taken and held very affectionately for two or three minutes.

" You have been enjoying this balmy air," said he to her in a voice sweetly modulated to the hour and the theme. " It is heaven's own breath, Miss Fanny, and to such a mind as yours must utter accents worthy of the source from whence it comes."

Fanny's beautiful eyes were fixed upon his face, and almost seemed to say,

"When you speak, I 'd have you do it ever."

"I do not think he recollects me," whispered Mary Richards in her ear: "I wish you'd introduce me."

Fanny Mowbray started, but recovering herself, said, "Mr. Cartwright, give me leave to introduce my friend Miss Mary Richards to you. She is one of your parishioners, and one that you will find capable of appreciating the happiness of being so."

Mr. Cartwright extended his pastoral hand to the young lady with a most gracious smile.

"God bless you both!" said he, joining their hands between both of his. "To lead you together in the path in which we must all wish to go, would be a task that might give a foretaste of the heaven we sought!—You are not little children," he added, again pressing each of their hands; "but I may safely say, 'of such are the kingdom of heaven.'"

He then turned towards Mrs. Mowbray, and

with a look and tone which showed that though he never alluded to her situation, he never forgot it, he inquired how far she had extended her ramble.

"Much farther than I intended when I set out," replied Mrs. Mowbray. "But my children, the weather, and the hay, altogether beguiled me to the bottom of Farmer Bennet's great meadow."

"Quite right, quite right," replied Mr. Cartwright, with something approaching almost to fervour of approbation: "this species of quiet courage, of gentle submission, is just what I expected from Mrs. Mowbray. It is the sweetest incense that you can offer to Heaven; and Heaven will repay it."

Mrs. Mowbray looked up at his mild countenance, and saw a moisture in his eye that spoke more tender pity than he would permit his lips to utter. It touched her to the heart.

Mrs. Richards, who was something of a florist, was examining, with the assistance of Rosalind, some new geraniums that were placed

on circular stands outside the drawing-room, filling the spaces between the windows. As this occupation had drawn them from the rest of the party from the time Mr. Cartwright approached to join it, they had not yet received that gentleman's salutation, and he now went up to them.

"Miss Torrington looks as if she were discoursing of her kindred. Are these fair blossoms the children of your especial care?"

"They are the children of the gardener and the greenhouse, I believe," she replied carelessly, and stepped on to another stand.

"Mrs. Richards, I believe?" said the graceful vicar, taking off his hat to her.

"I hope you are well, Mr. Cartwright?" replied the lady, following the steps of Rosalind.

The two eldest Misses Richards were still assiduously besieging the two ears of Helen; but as the subjects of which they discoursed did not always require the same answers, she began to feel considerable fatigue from the exertion necessary for carrying on this double conversa-

tion, and was therefore not sorry to see Mr. Cartwright approach them, which must, she thought, produce a diversion in her favour. But she found that the parties were still personally strangers to each other; for though his bow was general, his address was only to herself.

"And have you, too, Miss Mowbray, been venturing upon as long a walk as the rest of the party?"

"We have all walked the same distance, Mr. Cartwright; but I believe we none of us consider it to be very far. We are all good walkers."

"I rejoice to hear it, for it is the way to become good Christians. Where or how can we meet and *meetly* examine the works of the great Creator so well as on the carpet he has spread, and beneath the azure canopy which his hands have reared above us? — The Misses Richards, I believe? May I beg an introduction, Miss Mowbray?"

"Mr. Cartwright, Miss Richards — Miss

Charlotte Richards," said Helen, without adding another word.

" I need hardly ask if you are walkers," said the vicar, as he passed a smiling and apparently an approving glance over their rather remarkable length of limb. " Your friends, Miss Mowbray, look like young antelopes ready to bound over the fair face of Nature ; and their eyes look as if there were intelligence within wherewith to read her aright."

" Mamma is going in to tea, I believe," said Helen, moving off.

The whole manner and demeanour of the two Misses Richards had changed from the moment Mr. Cartwright approached. They became quite silent and demure; but as they followed Helen, one on each side of him, they coloured with pleasure as he addressed a gentle word, first to one, then to the other ; and when, after entering the drawing-room, he left them for the purpose of making his farewell bow, or the semblance of it, to Mrs. Mowbray, Miss Louisa whispered to Miss Charlotte, " Little

Mary is quite right: he *is* the most delightful man in the world."

"You are not going to leave us, Mr. Cartwright?" said Mrs. Mowbray kindly. "We are going to tea this moment."

"You are very obliging; but I had no intention of intruding on you thus."

"Pray do not call it an intrusion. We shall be always most happy to see you. I only wish your son and daughter were with us also."

"My daughter, thank you, is a sad invalid; and Jacob generally wanders farther afield in such weather as this. . . . Is that gentleman Major Dalrymple? May I ask you to introduce me?"

"I shall have much pleasure in doing so, I am sure. He is a very amiable and estimable person."

Mrs. Mowbray crossed the room towards him, followed by the vicar. The introduction took place, and the two gentlemen conversed together for a few minutes on the ordinary topics of Russia, the harvest, the slave-trade,

and reform. On every subject, except the harvest, which Mr. Cartwright despatched by declaring that it would be peculiarly abundant, the reverend gentleman expressed himself with an unusual flow of words, in sentences particularly well constructed; yet nevertheless his opinions seemed enveloped in a mist; and when Mrs. Richards afterwards asked the major his opinion of the new vicar, he replied that he thought his manners very gentlemanlike and agreeable, but that he did not perfectly remember what opinions he had expressed on any subject.

At first the company seemed inclined to disperse themselves in knots about the room; but by degrees Mr. Cartwright very skilfully contrived, on one pretence or another, to collect them all round a table that was covered with the usual incitements to talk, and the conversation became general. At least Mr. Cartwright was very generally listened to; the major did not speak at all; and the ladies did little more than agree with and applaud from time to time the placid, even, dulcet flow of

words which fell like a gentle rivulet from the lips of their new vicar. This description, indeed, would not apply quite generally to all the ladies; but the majority in his favour was five to three, and with this advantage,—that whereas his admirers were loud and eloquent in their expressions of approval, the minority contented themselves by preserving silence.

CHAPTER IX.

HELEN AND ROSALIND CALL UPON SIR GILBERT HARRINGTON.

HELEN MOWBRAY knew that the choleric friend whose gentler feelings she wished to propitiate was an early-riser himself, and was never better disposed to be well pleased with others than when they showed themselves capable of following his example. She was therefore anxious to arrive at his house in time to have the conversation she sought, yet dreaded, before nine o'clock, the usual family breakfast-hour; though in the shooting-season Sir Gilbert generally contrived to coax my lady and her housekeeper to have hot rolls smoking on the table by eight. But, luckily for the young ladies' morning repose, it was not shooting-season; and they calculated that if they started

about half-past seven, they should have time for their walk, and a reasonably long conversation afterwards, before the breakfast to which they looked as the pacific conclusion of the negotiation should be ready.

At half-past seven, accordingly, the fair friends met at the door of Rosalind's dressing-room, and set off, fearless, though unattended, through the shrubberies, the Park, the flowery lanes, and finally, across one or two hay-fields, which separated the two mansions.

Nothing can be better calculated to raise the animal spirits than an early walk in the gay month of June; and on those not accustomed to the elasticity, the freshness, the exhilarating clearness of the morning air, the effect is like enchantment. All the sad thoughts which had of late so constantly brooded round Helen's heart seemed to withdraw their painful pressure, and she again felt conscious of the luxury of life, with youth, health, and innocence, a clear sky, bright verdure, flowery banks, and shady hedge-rows, to adorn it.

Rosalind, by an irresistible impulse of gaiety,

joined her voice to those of the blackbirds that carolled near her, till she was stopped by Helen's exclaiming, "Rosalind, I feel courage for anything this morning!"

"Yes," answered her companion, "let Sir Gilbert appear in any shape but that of the Vicar of Wrexhill, and I should greet him with a degree of confidence and kindness that I am positive would be irresistible."

They were now within a short distance of the baronet's grounds, and another step brought their courage to the proof; for on mounting a stepping-stile which had originally been placed for the especial accommodation of the Mowbray ladies, they perceived the redoubtable Sir Gilbert at the distance of fifty paces, in the act of removing an offending dock-root with his spud.

He raised his eyes, and recognising his young visitors, stepped eagerly forward to meet them. To Rosalind, however, though usually a great favourite, he now paid not the slightest attention; but taking Helen in his arms, kissing her on both cheeks and on the forehead, and then

looking her in the face very much as if he were going to weep over her, he exclaimed,

"My poor, poor child! . . . Why did not you bring poor Fanny too? . . . . You are right to come away, quite right, my dear child: it 's dreadful to live in dependance upon any one's caprice for one's daily bread! Your home shall be here, Helen, and Fanny's too, as long as you like. Come, my dear, take my arm: my lady will dance, you may depend upon it, when she sees you, for we have had dreadful work about keeping her from Mowbray! I 'd just as soon keep a wild cat in order as your godmother, Helen, when she takes a fancy: but you know, my dear, her going to Mowbray was a thing not to be thought of. You are a good girl to come—it shows that you see the matter rightly. I wish Fanny were here too!"

All this was said with great rapidity, and without pausing for any answer. Meanwhile he had drawn Helen's arm within his, and was leading her towards the house.

Rosalind followed them quietly for a few

steps; and then, either moved thereto by the feeling of courage her walk had inspired, or from some latent consciousness of the baronet's partiality to herself, she boldly stepped up and took his arm on the other side.

"God bless my soul, Miss Torrington! . . . . by the honour of a knight, I never saw you; nor do I think I should have seen a regiment of young ladies, though they had been all as handsome as yourself, if they had happened to come with my poor dear Helen. It was very good of you to walk over with her, poor little thing! . . . . Your fortune is quite safe and independent, my dear, isn't it? Nobody's doing a foolish thing can involve you in any way, can it?"

"Not unless the foolish thing happened to be done by myself, Sir Gilbert."

"That 's a great blessing, my dear,—a very great blessing! . . . And you 'll be kind to our two poor girls, won't you, my dear?"

"I have more need that they should be kind to me—and so they are,—and we are all very kind to one another; and if you will be but very kind

too, and come and see us all as you used to do, we shall be very happy again in time."

"Stuff and nonsense, child! . . . You may come here, I tell you, and see me as much as you like, under my own roof,—because I know who that belongs to, and all about it; but I promise you that you will never see me going to houses that don't belong to their right owner,—it would not suit me in the least—quite out of my way; I should be making some devilish blunder, and talking to poor Charles about his estate and his property:—poor fellow! and he not worth sixpence in the world."

During all this time, Helen had not spoken a word. They had now nearly reached the house; and drawing her arm away, she held out her hand to Sir Gilbert, and said in a very humble and beseeching tone,

"Sir Gilbert! . . . may I speak to you alone for a few minutes?"

"Speak to me, child?—what about? Is it about a sweetheart? Is it about wanting pocket-money, my poor child?—I 'm executor

to your father's will, you know, Helen, and if you were starving in a ditch, and Fanny in another, and poor Charles begging his bread on the high road, I have not the power of giving either of ye a shilling of his property, though he has left above fourteen thousand a year!"

Sir Gilbert was now lashing himself into a rage that it was evident would render the object of Helen's visit abortive if she attempted to bring it forward now. She exchanged a glance with Rosalind, who shook her head, and the next moment contrived to whisper in her ear, "Wait till after breakfast."

Sir Gilbert was now striding up the steps to the hall-door: the two girls silently followed him, and were probably neither of them sorry to see Colonel Harrington coming forward to meet them.

This young man had for the two or three last years seen but little of the Mowbray family, having been abroad during nearly the whole of that time; but he returned with something very like a tender recollection of

Helen's having been the prettiest little nymph at fifteen that he had ever beheld, and her appearance at this moment was not calculated to make him think she had lost her delicate beauty during his absence. Her slight tall figure was shown to great advantage by her mourning dress; and the fair and abundant curls that crowded round her face, now a little flushed by exercise and agitation, made her altogether as pretty a creature in her peculiar style as a young soldier would wish to look upon.

The coal-black hair and sparkling dark eyes of Rosalind, her ruby lips and pearl-like teeth, her exquisite little figure, and the general air of piquant vivacity which made her perfectly radiant when animated, rendered her in most eyes the more attractive of the two; but Colonel Harrington did not think so; and giving her one glance of curiosity,—for he had never seen her before,—he decided that neither she, nor any other woman he had ever beheld, could compare in loveliness with his former friend and favourite.

His greeting to Helen was just what might be expected from a man who had known her with great intimacy when she was some half-dozen inches shorter, and who felt the strongest possible desire to renew the acquaintance with as little delay as possible.

"Helen Mowbray!" he exclaimed, springing forward and seizing her hand, "how delighted I am to see you! How is dear little Fanny? — how is Charles? I trust you have none of you forgotten me!"

Helen blushed deeply at the unexpected ardour of this address from a very tall, handsome, fashionable-looking personage, whose face she certainly would not have recognised had she met him accidentally: but a happy smile accompanied the blush, and he had no reason to regret the polite freedom of his first salutation, which had thus enabled him to pass over an infinity of gradations towards the intimacy he coveted, at one single step placing him at once on the footing of a familiar friend. It was indeed nearly impossible that Helen could be offended by the freedom; for not only was it

sanctioned by the long-established union of their two families, but at this moment she could not but be pleased at finding another dear old friend in the garrison, who would be sure to add his influence to that of her godmother, that what she so greatly wished to obtain should not be refused.

Before they reached the breakfast-room, therefore, the most perfect understanding was established between them. Her friend Miss Torrington was gaily introduced, for her heart felt gladdened by this important addition to her supporters in the cause she had undertaken; and she was disposed to believe that Rosalind's proposal to make this alarming visit would turn out to have been one of the most fortunate things that ever happened.

Within the breakfast-room, and approachable by no other access, was a small room, known throughout the mansion, and indeed throughout the neighbourhood also, as "My Lady's Closet." This sacred retreat was an oblong room, about eighteen feet by eight;

a large and lofty window occupied nearly one end of it, across which was placed a deal-dresser, or table of three feet wide, filling the entire space between the walls. The whole room was lined with shelves and drawers, the former of which were for the most part sheltered by heavy crimson damask curtains. A few small tables stood scattered here and there; and the sole accommodation for sitting consisted of one high stool, such as laundresses use when ironing.

To the door of this apartment Sir Gilbert approached, and there reverently stopped; for by the law of the land, even he, though a pretty extensively privileged personage, was permitted to go no farther, unless licensed by an especial warrant from its mistress.

"My lady," he said, in the cheerful lusty voice that announces agreeable tidings,—"My lady, I have brought home company to breakfast."

"Have you, Sir Knight?" replied Lady Harrington, without turning her head, or

otherwise interrupting herself in the performance of some apparently delicate process upon which she was occupied.

"I 'd rather have Mrs. Lot for a wife than such an incurious old soul as you are!" said the testy baronet.—"And so you have not even the grace to ask who it is?"

"Why, my dear Sir Tiger, I shall be sure to know within two minutes after Tompkins gives his passing thump to announce that he is carrying in the coffee; then why should I disturb this fairest of the Pentandria class?—my charming high-dried mirabilis?"

"The devil take you, and all your classes, orders, and tribes, to his own hothouse!—I 'll be hanged if I don't lock you into your den while I breakfast with her;—you shan't see her at all, by G–d!"

"Mother! mother!" exclaimed the colonel hastily, to anticipate the execution of the threat —"it is Helen Mowbray!"

"Helen Mowbray!" cried the old lady, thrusting her hot smoothing-iron on one side, and her blossom blotting-paper on the other,

while the precious mirabilis fell to the ground; "Helen Mowbray!" and pushing aside the bonnet by no very gentle movement of her tall and substantial person, she rushed forward, and Helen was speedily folded in a very close embrace.

"There, there, there! don't stifle the girl, old lady!—And supposing you were to bestow one little monosyllable of civility upon this pretty creature, Miss Torrington, who stands smiling at us all like an angel, though every soul amongst us is as rude as a bear to her. —I don't believe you ever found yourself so entirely neglected before, my dear?"

"I have never witnessed attention more gratifying to me than that which I have seen displayed this morning," replied Rosalind.

"You are a good girl, a very good girl, my dear, and I shall always love you for coming over with this poor dear disinherited child."

"Miss Torrington, I am delighted to see you, now and ever, my dear young lady," said Lady Harrington, who, when she chose it,

could be as dignified, and as courteous too, as any lady in the land.

"You have walked over, I am sure, by the bright freshness of your looks. Now, then, sit down one on each side of me, that I may be able to see you without hoisting a *lunette d'approche* across this prodigious table."

"And so, because your ladyship is near-sighted," said Sir Gilbert, "William and I are to sit at this awful distance from these beautiful damsels? You are a tiresome old soul as ever lived!"

"And that 's the reason you appear so profoundly melancholy and miserable at this moment," said Lady Harrington, looking with no trifling degree of satisfaction at the radiant good-humour and happiness which the unexpected arrival of Helen had caused to be visible in the countenance of her boisterous husband. "Do you find William much altered, Helen?" she continued. "I wonder if any one has had the grace to present Colonel Harrington to Miss Torrington?"

"Helen did me that kind office," said the

colonel, " and I suppose she must do the same for me to little Fanny. I long to see if she continues as surpassingly beautiful as she was when I took my sad, reluctant leave of Mowbray Park."

Rosalind immediately became answerable for the undiminished beauty of Fanny, adding to her report on this point a declaration that the whole family were anxious to renew their acquaintance with him.

This was the nearest approach that any of the party ventured to make towards the mention of Mowbray Park or its inhabitants. Nevertheless, the breakfast passed cheerfully, and even without a word from Sir Gilbert in allusion to the destitute condition of Helen, and her brother and sister. But when even the baronet had disposed of his last egg-shell, pushed the ham fairly away from him, and swallowed his last bowl of tea, the beautiful colour of Helen began gradually to deepen; she ceased to speak, and hardly seemed to hear what was said to her.

Rosalind took the hint, and with more tact

than is usually found in the possession of seventeen and a half, she said to Lady Harrington,

"If I promise to keep my hands not only from picking and stealing, but from touching, will your ladyship indulge me with a sight of your press, and your boxes, and a volume or two of your *hortus siccus?* for I feel considerable aspirations after the glory of becoming a botanist myself."

"My ladyship will show you something infinitely more to the purpose, then, if you will come to the hothouse with me," replied Lady Harrington, rising, and giving an intelligible glance to her son as she did so, which immediately caused him to rise and follow her. "I cannot take you where I should be sure to overhear them, my dear," she added in a whisper as she led Rosalind from the room; "for if my rough diamond should chance to be too rough with her, I should infallibly burst out upon them; and yet I know well enough that I should do nothing but mischief."

Helen was thus left alone with the kind-

hearted but pertinacious baronet. He seemed to have a misgiving of the attack that was about to be opened upon him; for he made a fidgetty movement in his chair, pushed it back, and looked so very much inclined to run away, that Helen saw no time was to be lost, and, in a voice not over-steady, said,

"I want to speak to you, Sir Gilbert, about my dear mamma. I fear from what you said to Charles, and more still by nobody's coming from Oakley to see us, that you are angry with her. — If it is about the will, Sir Gilbert, you do her great injustice: I am very, very sure that she neither wished for such a will, nor knew anything about it."

"It is very pretty and dutiful in you, Miss Helen, to say so, and to think so too if you can. Perhaps I might have done the same at nineteen; but at sixty-five, child, one begins to know a little better what signs and tokens mean.—There is no effect without a cause, Miss Helen. The effect in this affair is already pretty visible to all eyes, and will speedily become more so, you may depend upon it.

The cause may be still hid from babes and sucklings, but not from an old fellow like me, who knew your poor father, girl, before you were hatched or thought of,—and knew him to be both a good and a wise man, who would never have done the deed he did unless under the influence of one as ever near and ever dear to him as your mother."

"You have known my mother too, Sir Gilbert, for many, many years:—did you ever see in her any symptom of the character you now attribute to her?"

"If I had, Miss Helen, I should not loathe and abominate her hypocrisy as I now do. I will never see her more—for all our sakes: for if I did, I know right well that I could not restrain my indignation within moderate bounds."

"Then certainly it would be better that you should not see her," said the weeping Helen: "for indeed, sir, I think such unmerited indignation would almost kill her."

"If you knew anything about the matter, child, you would be aware that *merited* indig-

nation would be more likely to disagree with her. Unmerited indignation does one no harm in the world, as I can testify from experience; for my lady is dreadfully indignant, as I dare say you guess, at my keeping her and William away from Mowbray Park: and it 's ten to one but you will be indignant too, child;—but I can't help it. I love you all three very much, Helen; but I must do what I think right, for all that."

"Not indignant, Sir Gilbert;—at least, that would not be the prevailing feeling with me, though a sense of injustice might make it so with my poor mother. What I shall feel will be grief—unceasing grief, if the friend my beloved father most valued and esteemed continues to refuse his countenance and affection to the bereaved family he has left."

From the time this conversation began, Sir Gilbert had been striding up and down the room, as it was always his custom to do when he felt himself in a rage, or was conscious that he was about to be so. He now stopped opposite Helen; and while something very like

tenderness almost impeded his utterance, he said,

"That 's trash—damnable false trash! Miss Helen. After what 's passed to-day, to say nothing of times past, you must know well enough that I 'm not likely to refuse my countenance and affection to your father's children;—bereaved they are, sure enough! You know as well as I do, that I love you all three—for your own sakes, girl, as well as for his;—and your pretending to doubt it, was a bit of trumpery womanhood, Helen,—so never make use of it again: for you see I understand the sex,—and that 's just the reason why I like my old woman better than any other *she* in the wide world;—she never tries any make-believe tricks upon me."

"Believe me, Sir Gilbert," said Helen, smiling, "I hate tricks as much as my godmother can: and if it were otherwise, you are the last person I should try them upon. But how can we think you love us, if you will not come near Mowbray?"

"You may think it, and know it, very

easily, child, by the welcome you shall always find here. It is very likely that you may not be long comfortable at home; and before it happens, remember I have told you that you shall always have a home at Oakley: but it must not be on condition of bringing your mother with you; for see her I will not,—and there 's an end."

Helen remained silent. She felt painfully convinced that, at least for the present, she should gain nothing by arguing the cause of her mother any farther; and after a long pause, during which Sir Gilbert continued to pace up and down before her, she rose, and sighing deeply, said,

"I believe it is time for us to return.—Good-b'ye, Sir Gilbert."

There was something in the tone of her voice which very nearly overset all the sturdy resolution of the baronet; but instead of yielding to the weakness, as he would have called it, like a skilful general he marched off the field with his colours still flying, and certainly without giving his adversary any reasonable ground to hope for victory.

"They are all in the hothouse, I believe," said he, walking before Helen to a door of the hall which opened upon the beautiful gardens. "You have not seen my lady's heaths for many a day, Helen;—she 'll be savage if you go without taking a look at them."

Helen followed without saying a word in reply, for her heart was full; and when she joined the trio who had so considerately left her to the uninterrupted possession of Sir Gilbert's ear, there was no need of any questioning on their part, or answering on hers, to put them all in full possession of the result of the tête-à-tête.

It would be difficult to say which of the three looked most vexed: perhaps Lady Harrington gave the strongest outward demonstrations of what she felt on the occasion.

She glanced frowningly at Sir Gilbert, who looked as if he intended to say something amiable, and seizing upon Helen's two hands, kissed them both, exclaiming, "Dearest and best! what a heart of flint must that being have who could find the cruel strength to pain thee!"

Drawn and Etched by A. Hervieu.

Colonel Harrington, who, discomposed and disappointed, had thrown himself on a bench, gave his mother a very grateful look for this; while Rosalind, after examining her sad countenance for a moment, pressed closely to her friend and whispered, "Let us go, Helen."

Poor Helen had no inclination to delay her departure; and knowing that her partial godmother was fully capable of understanding her feelings, she said, returning her caresses,

"Do not keep me a moment longer, dearest friend, for fear I should weep! and then I am sure he would call it a trick."

"I will not keep you, Helen," replied Lady Harrington aloud. "You have come on a mission of love and peace; and if I mistake not that heavy eye and feverish cheek, you have failed. Poor child! she does not look like the same creature that she did an hour and a half ago—does she, William?"

"Adieu, Lady Harrington!" said Helen, the big tears rolling down her cheeks despite her struggles to prevent them. "Good morning, Colonel Harrington; — farewell, Sir Gilbert!"

"This is d——d hard, Miss Torrington!" said the baronet, turning from Helen's offered hand; "this is confounded hard! I 'm doing my duty, and acting according to my conscience as a man of honour, and yet I shall be made to believe that Nero was a dove, and Bluebeard a babe of grace, compared to me!"

But Miss Torrington being in no humour to answer him playfully, said gravely,

"I am very sorry we broke in upon you so unadvisedly, Sir Gilbert. It is plain our hopes have not been realised."

The young lady bowed silently to the colonel, and taking a short farewell of Lady Harrington, but one in which mutual kindness was mutually understood, she took the arm of her discomfited friend, and they proceeded towards a little gate in the iron fencing which divided the garden from the paddock in front of the house.

"And you won't shake hands with me, Helen!" said Sir Gilbert, following.

"Do not say so, sir," replied Helen, turning back and holding out her hand.

"And when shall we see you here again?"

"Whenever you will come and fetch me, Sir Gilbert," she replied, endeavouring to look cheerful. He took her hand, wrung it, and turned away without speaking.

"Your interdict, sir," said Colonel Harrington, "does not, I hope, extend beyond Mowbray Park paling? — I trust I may be permitted to take care of these young ladies as far as the lodges?"

"If you did not do it, you know very well that I should, you puppy!" replied his father: and so saying, he turned into a walk which led in a direction as opposite as possible from that which his ireful lady had chosen.

Colonel Harrington felt that it required some exertion of his conversational powers to bring his fair companions back to the tone of cheerful familiarity which had reigned among them all at the breakfast-table; but the exertion was made, and so successfully, that before the walk was ended a feeling of perfect confidence was established between them. When they were about to part, he said,

"My mother and I shall labour, and cease not, to work our way through the *écorce* to the kernel of my good father's heart; and there we shall find exactly the material we want, of which to form a reconciliation between your mother and him. — Farewell, Helen! — farewell, Miss Torrington! I trust that while the interdict lasts, chance will sometimes favour our meeting beyond the forbidden precincts."

He stepped forward to open the Park gate for them, shook hands, uttered another "Farewell!" and departed.

CHAPTER X.

MRS. MOWBRAY CONSULTS MR. CARTWRIGHT UPON THE SUBJECT OF HER LATE HUSBAND'S WILL.

The first person they encountered on entering the house was Fanny.

"Where *have* you been!" she exclaimed. "My mother is half frightened to death. Do go to her this moment, Helen, to set her heart at ease."

"Where is she, Fanny?" inquired Helen, with a sigh, as she remembered how little the answers she must necessarily give to the questions she would be sure to ask were likely to produce that effect.

"In her dressing-room, Helen. But where *have* you been?"

"To Oakley."

"Good gracious, Helen!—and without asking mamma's leave?"

"I did it with a good intention, Fanny. Do you think I was wrong in endeavouring to restore the intimacy that has been so cruelly interrupted? Do you think mamma will be very angry? I am sure it was chiefly for her sake that I went."

"No, I am sure she will not when you tell her that. But come directly: I do assure you she has been seriously uneasy.—Did you find Sir Gilbert very savage, Rosalind?"

"*Pas mal*, my dear."

Another moment brought them to Mrs. Mowbray. "Thank God!" was her first exclamation on seeing them; and the repetition of Fanny's emphatic "Where *have* you been?" followed it.

"Dearest mother!" said Helen, fondly embracing her, "do not chide us very severely, even if we have been wrong; for indeed we meant to be very, very right; and when we set out the expedition appeared to us anything but a pleasant one. We have been to Oakley."

"I am too thankful at seeing you returned in safety, my dear girls, to be very angry at anything. But do tell me, Helen, what could have induced you to volunteer a visit to the only people who have been unkind to us since your poor father's death?"

"In the hope, mamma, of putting an end to an estrangement which I thought was very painful to you."

"Dearest Helen! it was just like you! And have you succeeded, my love?"

"No, mamma, I have not."

Mrs. Mowbray coloured.

"And pray, Helen, have they explained to you the cause of their extraordinary and most unfeeling conduct?"

"Do not say *they*, dearest mother! Lady Harrington is greatly distressed at Sir Gilbert's conduct: so is the colonel, who is just come home. Whatever fault there may be, it is Sir Gilbert's alone."

"Did he, then, explain himself to you?"

Helen remained silent.

"I must request, Helen," resumed her mo-

ther, "that you make no farther mystery about the Harringtons. I am willing to excuse the strange step you took this morning; but I shall be seriously displeased if you refuse to tell me what passed during your visit. Of what is it that Sir Gilbert accuses me?"

"I pointed out to him, mamma, the injustice of being angry with you because papa made a will that he did not approve."

"Well, Helen! and what did he say to that?"

"Upon my word, mamma, I could not find a shadow of reason in anything he said."

"You evade my questions, Helen. I insist upon knowing what it is that Sir Gilbert lays to my charge. — Helen! — do you refuse to answer me?"

"Oh no, mamma! — but you cannot think how painful it would be for me to repeat it!"

"I cannot help it, Helen: you have brought this pain on yourself by your very unadvised visit of this morning. But since you have gone to the house of one who has declared himself my enemy, you must let me know exactly

what it is he has chosen to accuse me of; unless you mean that I should imagine you wish to shield him from my resentment because you think him right."

"Oh, my mother!" cried Helen; "what a word is that!"

"Well, then, do not trifle with me any longer, but repeat at once all that you heard him say."

Thus urged, poor Helen stated Sir Gilbert's very unjust suspicions respecting the influence used to induce Mr. Mowbray to make the will he had left. It was in vain she endeavoured to modify and soften the accusation,—the resentment and indignation of Mrs. Mowbray were unbounded; and Helen had the deep mortification of perceiving that the only result of her enterprise was to have rendered the breach she so greatly wished to repair a hundred times wider than before.

"And this man, with these base and vile suspicions, is the person your father has left as joint executor with me!—What a situation does this place me in! Did he make any allusion to this, Helen?—did he say anything of

the necessary business that we have, most unfortunately, to transact together?"

"No, mamma, he did not."

A long silence followed this question and answer. Mrs. Mowbray appeared to suffer greatly, and in fact she did so. Nothing could be farther from the truth than the idea Sir Gilbert Harrington had conceived, and its injustice revolted and irritated her to a degree that she never before experienced against any human being. That Helen should have listened to such an accusation, pained her extremely; and a feeling in some degree allied to displeasure against her mingled with the disagreeable meditations in which she was plunged.

"My head aches dreadfully!" she said at last. "Fanny, give me my shawl and parasol: I will try what a walk in the fresh air will do for me."

"May I go with you, mamma?" said Helen.

"No, my dear; you have had quite walking enough. Fanny has not been out at all: she may come with me."

These words were both natural and reasonable, but there was something in them that smote Helen to the heart. She fondly loved her mother, and, for the first time, she suspected that her heart and feelings were not understood.

Mrs. Mowbray and Fanny had just walked through the library windows into the garden, when they perceived Mr. Cartwright approaching the house. They both uttered an exclamation of pleasure at perceiving him, and Fanny said eagerly, "He must see us, mamma! Do not let him go all the way round to the hall-door! May we not walk across and meet him?"

"To be sure. Run forward, Fanny; and when he sees you coming to him, he will turn this way."

She was not mistaken: Fanny had not made three steps in advance of her mother, before Mr. Cartwright turned from the road, and passing through a gate in the invisible fence, joined her in a moment.

"How kind this is of you!" said he as

he drew near ;—" to appear thus willing to receive again an intruder, whose quick return must lead you to suspect that you are in danger of being haunted by him ! And so I think you are, Miss Fanny ; and I will be generous enough to tell you at once, that if you greet me thus kindly, I shall hardly know how to keep away from Mowbray Park."

" But mamma is so glad to see you," said Fanny, blushing beautifully, " that I am sure you need not try to keep away !"

Mrs. Mowbray now drew near to answer for herself; which she did very cordially, assuring him that she considered these friendly and unceremonious visits as the greatest kindness he could show her.

" It will be long, I think," said she, " before I shall have courage sufficient to invite any one to this mournful and sadly-altered mansion : but those whose friendship I really value will, I trust, have the charity to come to us without waiting for an invitation."

" I wish I could prove to you, my dear madam," replied Mr. Cartwright with respect-

ful tenderness, "how fervently I desire to serve you: but, surrounded by old and long-tried friends as you must be, how can a new-comer and a stranger hope to be useful?"

This was touching a very tender point—and it is just possible that Mr. Cartwright was aware of it, as he was present at the reading of the will, and heard Sir Gilbert Harrington's first burst of rage on becoming acquainted with its contents. But Mrs. Mowbray had either forgotten this circumstance, or, feeling deeply disturbed at the fresh proof which Helen had brought her of the falling off of an old friend, was disposed to revert anew to it, in the hope of moving the compassion and propitiating the kindness of a new one.

"Alas! my dear sir," she said feelingly, "even old friends will sometimes fail us; and then it is that we ought to thank God for such happy accidents as that which has placed near us one so able and kindly willing to supply their place as yourself.—Fanny, my love, the business on which I have to speak is a painful one: go to your sister, dearest, while I ask our

kind friend's advice respecting this unhappy business."

"Good-b'ye then, Mr. Cartwright," said Fanny, holding out her hand to him.—"But perhaps I shall see you again as you go away, for I shall be in the garden."

"God bless you, my dear child!" said he fervently, as he led her a few steps towards the shrubberies; "God bless, and have you in his holy keeping!"

"What an especial blessing have you, my dear friend," he said, returning to Mrs. Mowbray, "in that charming child!—Watch over her, and guard her from all evil! for she is one who, if guided in that only path which leads to good, will be a saving and a precious treasure to all who belong to her; but if led astray—alas! the guilt that the downfall of so pure a spirit would entail on those whose duty it is to watch over her!"

"She is indeed an excellent young creature!" said the proud mother, whose darling the lovely Fanny had ever been; "but I think

she wants less guiding than any child I ever saw,—and it has always been so. She learned faster than she could be taught; and her temper is so sweet, and her heart so affectionate, that I really do not remember that she has ever deserved a reprimand in her life."

"May the precepts of her admirable mother ever keep her thus!" said Mr. Cartwright, as they seated themselves in the library, into which they had entered. "But, oh! my dear lady! know you not that it is just such sweet and gifted creatures as your Fanny that the Evil One seeks for his own?—Nay, look not thus terrified, my excellent, my exemplary friend,—look not thus terrified: if it be thus, as most surely it is—if Satan doth indeed first seek to devour those that God seems to mark more especially for his own, think you he has left us without help to resist? My dear, my admirable Mrs. Mowbray! yours is the hand appointed to lead this fair and attractive being unspotted through the world. If great—awfully great, as assuredly it is, be the responsibility, great—

unspeakably great, will be the reward. Then tremble not, dear friend! watch and pray, and this unmeasurable reward shall be yours!"

Mrs. Mowbray, however, did tremble; but her trembling was accompanied by a sweet and well-pleased consciousness of being considered by the excellent man beside her as capable of leading this darling child to eternal happiness and glory. The look, the accent of Mr. Cartwright went farther than his words to convince her that he believed this power to be hers, and she gazed at him with something of the reverence and humble love with which Catholics contemplate the effigies of the saints they worship.

"But what was the business, the painful business, my poor friend, upon which you wished to consult me, before that vision of light had drawn all our attention upon herself? What was it, my dear Mrs. Mowbray, you wished to say to me?"

I am hardly justified, I fear, Mr. Cartwright, thus early in our acquaintance, in taking up

your valuable time in listening to my sorrows and my wrongs; but in truth I have both to bear; and I have at this moment no friend near me to whom I can apply for advice how to proceed with business that puzzles almost as much as it distresses me. May I, then, my dear sir, intrude on your kindness for half an hour, while I state to you the singular predicament in which I am placed?"

"Were it not, as most assuredly it is—were it not, dearest Mrs. Mowbray, a true and deep-felt pleasure to me to believe that I might possibly be useful to you, it would be my especial and bounden duty to strive to be so. For what are the ministers of the Most High placed amidst the people? wherefore are their voices raised, so that all should hear them? Is it not, my friend, because their lives, their souls, their bodies, are devoted to the service of those committed by Providence to their care? And, trust me, the minister who would shrink from this is unworthy—utterly unworthy the post to which he has been called. Speak, then, dearest Mrs.

Mowbray, as to one bound alike by duty and the most fervent good-will to aid and assist you to the utmost extent of his power."

The great natural gift of Mr. Cartwright was the power of making his voice, his eye, and the flexible muscles of his handsome mouth, echo, and, as it were, reverberate and reiterate every word he spoke, giving to his language a power beyond its own. What he now said was uttered rapidly, but with an apparent depth and intensity of feeling that brought tears of mingled gratitude and admiration to the eyes of Mrs. Mowbray. After a moment given to this not unpleasing emotion, she said,

"It was from you, Mr. Cartwright, if I remember rightly, that I first heard the enactments of my husband's will. When I give you my word, as I now most solemnly do, that I had never during his life the slightest knowledge of what that will was to be, I think you will believe me."

"Believe you!" exclaimed Mr. Cartwright. "Is there on earth a being sufficiently de-

praved to doubt an assertion so vouched by you ?"

" Oh, Mr. Cartwright ! if all men had your generous, and, I will say, just confidence in me, I should not now be in the position I am ! But Sir Gilbert Harrington, the person most unhappily chosen by Mr. Mowbray as joint executor with myself, is persuaded that this generous will was made in my favour solely in consequence of my artful influence over him ; and so deeply does he resent this imputed crime, that instead of standing forward, as he ought to do, as the protector and agent of his friend's widow, he loads the memory of that friend with insult, and oppresses me with scorn and revilings, the more bitter because conveyed to me by my own child."

Mrs. Mowbray wept.—Mr. Cartwright hid his face with his hands, and for some moments seemed fearful of betraying all he felt. At length he fixed his eyes upon her—eyes moistened by a tear, and in a low, deep voice that seemed to indicate an inward struggle, he uttered, " *Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord !*"

He closed his eyes, and sat for a moment silent,—then added, " Perhaps of all the trials to which we are exposed in this world of temptation, the obeying this mandate is the most difficult! But, like all uttered by its Divine Author, it is blessed alike by its authority and its use. Without it!—my friend! without it, would not my hand be grappling the throat of your malignant enemy?—Without it, should I not even now be seeking to violate the laws of God and man, to bring the wretch who can thus stab an angel woman's breast to the dust before her? But, thanks to the faith that is in me, I *know* that his suspicious heart and cruel soul shall meet a vengeance as much greater than any I could inflict, as the hand that wields it is more powerful than mine! I humbly thank my God for this, and remembering it, turn with chastened spirit from the forbidden task of punishing him, to the far more Christian one of offering aid to the gentle being he would crush.—Was it indeed from the lips of your child, my poor friend, that these base aspersions reached you?"

"It was indeed, Mr. Cartwright; and it was this which made them cut so deeply. Poor Helen knew not what she was about when she secretly left her mother's roof to visit this man, in the hope of restoring the families to their former habits of intimacy!"

"Did Helen do this?" said Mr. Cartwright with a sort of shiver.

"Yes, poor thing, she did; and perhaps for her pains may have won caresses for herself. But, by her own statement—most reluctantly given, certainly,—she seems to have listened to calumnies against her mother, which I should have thought no child of mine would have borne to hear;" and again Mrs. Mowbray shed tears.

"Great God of heaven!" exclaimed Mr. Cartwright, fervently clasping his hands, "wilt thou not visit for these things!—He will, he will, my friend! Dear, tortured Mrs. Mowbray, turn your weeping eyes to Heaven! those drops shall not fall in vain. It was your child—a child nurtured in that gentle bosom, who repeated to you this blas-

phemy? Oh, fie! fie! fie! But let us not think of this,—at least, not at this trying moment. Hereafter means must be taken to stay this plague-spot from spreading over the hearts of all whom nature has given to love and honour you. Your pretty, gentle Fanny! she at least will not, I think, be led to listen to any voice that shall speak ill of you:—sweet child! let her be near your heart, and that will comfort you.—But, alas! my poor friend, this maternal disappointment, grievous as it is, will not be all you have to bear from this wretch whom the Most High, for his own good but inscrutable purposes, permits to persecute you. There must be business, my dear Mrs. Mowbray, business of great importance that this man must be immediately called upon to execute with you,—the proving the will, for instance; he must either do this, or refuse to act."

"Would to Heaven he might refuse!" said Mrs. Mowbray eagerly; "what a relief would this be to me, Mr. Cartwright! Do you think there would be any possibility of leading him to it?"

"Of leading him,—certainly not; for it is very clear from his conduct that whatever you appeared to wish, *that* he would be averse to do. Your only hope of obtaining what would most assuredly be an especial blessing for you, his formal renunciation of the executorship, would, I think, be from writing to him immediately, and imperatively demanding his joining you forthwith in proving the will. In such a state of mind as he must be in before he would bear to utter his vile suspicions to your daughter, I think it very likely he may refuse."

"And what would happen then, Mr. Cartwright?"

"You must place yourself in the hands of a respectable lawyer, totally a stranger and unconnected with him, and he would put you in the way to prove it yourself; after which he could give you no further trouble of any kind: unless, indeed, your misguided children should continue to frequent his house, and so become the means of wounding your ears and your heart by repeating his calumnies. But this I trust the God of all wisdom and goodness will give you power to prevent."

"With your help and counsel, Mr. Cartwright, I may yet hope to weather the storm that seems to have burst upon me; but indeed it could hardly have burst upon any one less capable of struggling with it! In what language should I write to this cruel man, who has so undeservedly become my enemy?"

"There is no difficulty there, my friend. The shortest and most strictly ceremonious form must be the best."

Mrs. Mowbray drew towards her materials for writing,—opened the portfolio, which between its leaves of blotting-paper contained sundry sheets of wire-wove, black-edged post,—placed one of them before her,—took a pen and curiously examined its tip—dipped it delicately in the ink, and finally turned to Mr. Cartwright, saying,

"How very grateful I should be if you would have the great kindness to write it for me!"

"But the hand-writing, my dear lady, must be yours."

"Oh, yes! I know. But it would be so

much more satisfactory if you would sketch the form!"

"Then I am sure I will do it most readily." He drew the paper to him and wrote,

"Mrs. Mowbray presents her compliments to Sir Gilbert Harrington, and requests to know on what day it will suit him to meet her and her lawyer in London, for the purpose of proving her late husband's will at Doctors' Commons. The amount of the real property may be ascertained by the rent-roll; that of the personal, by means of papers left by the deceased, and a valuation of the effects made by competent persons. Mrs. Mowbray begs leave to intimate that she wishes as little delay as possible to intervene before the completion of this transaction."

Mr. Cartwright turned what he had written towards her, saying, "This is the sort of letter which I should think it advisable to send."

Mrs. Mowbray drew forth another sheet, and transcribed it so rapidly that it might be doubted whether she allowed herself time to read it as she did so.

"And this should be despatched instantly, should it not?" she said, folding and directing it.

"Indeed, I think so."

"Then will you have the kindness to ring the bell, Mr. Cartwright?"

"Bring me a lighted taper, John," said Mrs. Mowbray to the servant who entered; "and let Thomas get a horse ready to take this letter immediately to Oakley."

The taper was brought, the letter sealed and delivered, with instructions that the bearer was to wait for an answer.

This important business concluded, Mr. Cartwright rose to go, saying, "You have filled my heart and my head so completely by the communication of Sir Gilbert Harrington's conduct, that I protest to you I do not at this moment recollect why it was I troubled you with a visit this morning. I shall recollect it, I dare say, when I see you no longer; and if I do, you must let me come back before very long to tell you."

"But whether you recollect it or not," re-

plied Mrs. Mowbray in a plaintive tone, "I trust you will not let it be long before I see you: otherwise, Mr. Cartwright, I shall not know how to proceed when I receive Sir Gilbert's answer."

This appeal was answered by an assurance, uttered in a tone of the most soothing kindness, that he would never be far from her when she wished him near; and then, with a pastoral and affectionate pressure of her hand, he left her.

Fanny kept her word, and was walking up and down about a dozen yards from that end of the shrubbery which terminated in the road leading to the house. Mr. Cartwright looked in that direction as he stepped from the library window, and walking quickly to the spot, conversed with her for several minutes as she stood leaning over the gate. Fanny smiled, blushed, and looked delighted: her hand, too, was pressed with affectionate kindness; and Mr. Cartwright returned to his vicarage and his early dinner.

CHAPTER XI.

HELEN'S MISERY AT HER MOTHER'S DISPLEASURE.—SIR G. HARRINGTON'S LETTER ON THE SUBJECT OF THE WILL.

When Miss Torrington and Helen retreated to the dressing-room appropriated to the former, which was the apartment in which they generally pursued their morning studies, they sat down disconsolately enough to review the results of their enterprise.

"Everything is ten times worse than it was before, Helen!" said her friend; "and it is all my fault!"

"Your fault? — Oh, no! But I believe we are both of us too young to interfere, with any reasonable hope of doing good, between those who in age and wisdom are so greatly our superiors. Oh, Rosalind! I fear, I fear that my dearest mother is very angry with me!"

"I cannot believe it, Helen. I hardly know how far a dutiful daughter may be permitted to act like a rational human being; but, to the best of my knowledge and belief, your conduct has been such as to ensure you the approbation and gratitude of any mother in the world—at least of any reasonable mother. You know, Helen, how truly fond I have become of my sweet-tempered guardianess.—Is there such a word? — I believe not;—of my guardian, then. During the eight months that I have made one of her family, I have never yet received a harsh word or unkind look from her, though I have not the slightest doubt that I have deserved many: but nevertheless, my own dear Helen, if she should blunder so egregiously as to be really angry with you for acting with such zealous, tender affection as you have done this morning, merely because that obstinate old brute Sir Gilbert was not to be brought to reason; if she should really act thus — which I trust in God she will not — but if she should, I do verily believe, in all sincerity, that I should hate her."

"No, you would not,—you would not be so unjust, Rosalind. What right had we to volunteer our silly services? What right had I, in particular, to fancy that if Sir Gilbert would not listen to the remonstrances of his excellent and very clever wife, he would listen to mine? — I really am ashamed of my silly vanity and most gross presumption; and if my dear, dearest mother will but forgive me this once, as all naughty children say, I do not believe she will ever have cause to chide me for meddling again. Oh, Rosalind! if she did but know how I love her, she could never have looked so coldly on me as she did when she told me I had had walking enough!"

"I hope you are mistaken; I hope she did not look coldly on you. I hope she is not angry; for if she be . . . . I shall go over to the enemy, Helen, as sure as my name is Rosalind, and you may live to see me patting the rough hide of that very shaggy British bull-dog, Sir Gilbert, every time he says something impertinent against your mother."

"There is one thing," said Helen, slightly

colouring, "that does in some little degree reconcile me to the unfortunate visit of this morning — and that is . . . ."

"The having met Colonel Harrington!" cried Rosalind, interrupting her. "Is it not so?"

"You are right," replied her friend composedly. "William Harrington, when he was simply William Harrington, and not a dashing colonel of dragoons, was kindness itself to me, when I was a puny, fretful girl, that cried when I ought to have laughed. I cannot forget his good-natured protecting ways with me, and I should have been truly sorry if he had left the country again, as I suppose he will soon do, without my seeing him."

"Truly, I believe you, my dear," replied Rosalind, laughing. "And your plain William Harrington, too, seemed as willing to renew the acquaintance as yourself. To tell you the truth, Helen, I thought I saw symptoms of a mighty pretty little incipient flirtation."

"How can you talk such nonsense, when we have so much to make us sad! Don't you

think I had better go and see if mamma is come in, Rosalind? I cannot express to you how miserable I shall be as long as I think that she is angry with me."

At this moment the bell which announced that the luncheon was ready, sounded, and poor Helen exclaimed, "Oh, I am so sorry! I ought to have sought her again, before meeting her in this manner. But come! perhaps her dear face will look smilingly at me again: how I will kiss her if it does!"

But the warm heart was again chilled to its very core by the look Mrs. Mowbray wore as the two girls entered the room. Fanny was already seated next her. This was a place often playfully contested between the sisters, and Helen thought, as she approached the door, that if she could get it, and once more feel her mother's hand between her own, she should be the happiest creature living.

But nothing could be less alike, than what followed her entrance, to the imaginings which preceded it. Mrs. Mowbray was unusually silent to them all, but to Helen she addressed

not a single word. This was partly owing to the feeling of displeasure which had recently been so skilfully fastened in her breast, and partly to the anxiety she felt respecting the answer of Sir Gilbert to her note.

In the middle of the silent and nearly untasted meal, the poetical Fanny being in truth the only one who appeared to have much inclination to eat, a salver was presented to Mrs. Mowbray, from whence, with a heightened colour and almost trembling hand, she took a note. She instantly rose from table and left the room. Helen rose too, but not to follow her: she could no longer restrain her tears, and it was to hide this from Fanny, and if possible from Rosalind, that she hastened to leave them both, and shut herself in her own chamber to weep alone.

The present emotion of Helen cannot be understood without referring to the manner in which she had hitherto lived with her mother, and indeed to the general habits of the family. Mystery of any kind was unknown among them; and to those who have observed the effect

of this, its prodigious influence on the general tone of family intercourse must be well known. To those who have not, it would be nearly impossible to convey in words an adequate idea of the difference which exists in a household where the parents make a secret of all things of important interest, and where they do not. It is not the difference between ease and restraint, or even that more striking still, between sweet and sour tempers in the chief or chiefs of the establishment; it is a thousand times more vital than either. Without this easy, natural, spontaneous confidence, the family union is like a rope of sand, that will fall to pieces and disappear at the first touch of anything that can attract and draw off its loose and unbound particles. But if it be important as a general family habit, it is ten thousand times more so in the intercourse between a mother and her daughters. Let no parent believe that affection can be perfect without it; and let no mother fancy that the heart of her girl can be open to her if it find not an open heart in return. Mothers! if you value the precious deposit of

your dear girls' inmost thoughts, peril not the treasure by chilling them with any mystery of your own! It is not in the nature of things that confidence should exist on one side only: it must be mutual.

Never was there less of this hateful mildew of mystery than in the Mowbray family during the life of their father. Whatever were the questions that arose,—whether they concerned the purchase of an estate, or the giving or accepting an invitation to dinner,—whether it were a discussion respecting the character of a neighbour, or the flavour of the last packet of tea,—they were ever and always canvassed in full assembly; or if any members were wanting, it was because curiosity, which lives only by searching for what is hid, lacking its proper aliment, had perished altogether, and so set the listeners free.

This new-born secrecy in her mother struck therefore like a bolt of ice into the very heart of the sensitive Helen. "Have I lost her for ever!" she exclaimed aloud, though in solitude. "Mother! mother! — is it to be ever thus!

— If this be the consequence of my poor father's will, well might Sir Gilbert deplore it! How happily could I have lived for ever, dependent on her for my daily bread, so I could have kept her heart for ever as open as my own!"

At this period, Helen Mowbray had much suffering before her; but she never perhaps felt a pang more bitter in its newness than that which accompanied the conviction that her mother had a secret which she meant not to communicate to her. She felt the fact to be what it really was, neither more nor less; she felt that it announced the dissolution of that sweet and perfect harmony which had hitherto existed between them.

The note from Sir Gilbert Harrington was as follows:

"Sir Gilbert Harrington presents his compliments to Mrs. Mowbray, and begs to inform her that he has not the slightest intention of ever acting as executor to the very singular and mysterious document opened in his pre-

sence on the 12th of May last past, purporting to be the last will and testament of his late friend, Charles Mowbray, Esquire.

"Oakley, June 29th, 1834."

"The lady had gone to her secret bower" to peruse this scroll; and it was fortunate perhaps that she did so, for it produced in her a sensation of anger so much more violent than she was accustomed to feel, that she would have done herself injustice by betraying it.

Mrs. Mowbray had passed her life in such utter ignorance of every kind of business, and such blind and helpless dependence, first on her guardians, and then on her husband, that the idea of acting for herself was scarcely less terrible than the notion of navigating a seventy-four would be to ladies in general. Her thoughts now turned towards Mr. Cartwright, as to a champion equally able and willing to help and defend her, and she raised her eyes to Heaven with fervent gratitude for the timely happiness of having met with such a friend.

That friend had pointed out to her the fault

committed by Helen in a manner that made it appear to her almost unpardonable. To have doubted the correctness of his judgment on this, or any point, would have been to doubt the stability of that staff which Providence had sent her to lean upon in this moment of her utmost need. She doubted him not: and Helen was accordingly thrust out, not without a pang perhaps, from that warm and sacred station in her mother's heart that it had been the first happiness of her existence to fill. Poor Helen! matters were going worse for her—far worse than she imagined, though she was unhappy and out of spirits. She believed, indeed, that her mother was really angry; but, terrible as her forebodings were, she dreamed not that she was already and for ever estranged.

As soon as the first burst of passionate anger had been relieved by a solitary flood of tears, Mrs. Mowbray called a council with herself, as to whether she should immediately despatch a messenger to request Mr. Cartwright to call upon her in the evening, or whether she should trust to the interest he had so warmly ex-

pressed, which, if sincere, must bring him to her, she thought, on the morrow.

After anxiously debating this point for nearly an hour, and deciding first on one line of conduct, and then on the other, at least six different times within that period, she at last determined to await his coming; and concealing the doubts and fears which worried her by confining herself to her room under pretence of headach, the three girls were left to pass the remainder of the day by themselves, when, as may easily be imagined, the important events of the morning were fully discussed among them.

Fanny, after the motives of the visit to Oakley had been fully explained to her, gave it as her opinion that Helen was wrong in going without the consent of her mother, but that her intention might plead in atonement for it. But her indignation at hearing of the pertinacious obstinacy of Sir Gilbert was unbounded.

"Oh! how my poor father was deceived in him!" she exclaimed. "He must have a

truly bad heart to forsake and vilify my mother at the time she most wants the assistance of a friend. For you know there is business, Helen, relative to the will, and the property, and all that—Sir Gilbert understands it all,—hard-hearted wretch! and I doubt not he thinks he shall crush poor mamma to the dust by thus leaving her, as he believes, without a friend. But, thank God! he will find he is mistaken."

"What do you mean, Fanny?" said Rosalind sharply.

"I mean, Rosalind, that mamma is *not* without a friend," replied Fanny with emphasis. "It has pleased God in his mercy to send her one when she most needed it."

"I trust that God will restore to her and to us the old, well-known, and trusted friend of my father," said Helen gravely. "On none other can we rest our hope for counsel and assistance, when needed, so safely."

"Even if you were right, Helen," replied her sister, "there would be small comfort in your observation. Of what advantage to mam-

ma, or to us, would the good qualities of Sir Gilbert be, if it be his will, as it evidently is, to estrange himself from us? What a contrast is the conduct of Mr. Cartwright to his!"

"Mr. Cartwright!" cried Rosalind, distorting her pretty features into a grimace that intimated abundant scorn,—"Mr. Cartwright! There is much consolation, to be sure, in what an acquaintance of yesterday can do or say, for the loss of such an old friend as Sir Gilbert Harrington!"

"It would be a sad thing for poor mamma if there were not," replied Fanny. "Of what advantage to her, I ask you, is the long standing of her acquaintance with Sir Gilbert, if his caprice and injustice are to make him withdraw himself at such a time as this?—And how unreasonable and unchristian-like would it be, Rosalind, were she to refuse the friendship of Mr. Cartwright, because she has not known him as long?"

"The only objection I see to her treating Mr. Cartwright as a confidential friend is, that she does not know him at all," said Rosalind.

"Nor ever can, if she treats him as you do, Miss Torrington," answered Fanny, colouring. "I believe Mr. Edward Wallace was an especial favourite of yours, my dear; and that perhaps may in some degree account for your prejudice against our good Mr. Cartwright.—Confess, Rosalind;—is it not so?"

"He was indeed an especial favourite with me!" replied Rosalind gravely; and for the love I bear you all, and more particularly for your sake, Fanny, and your poor mother's, I would give much—much—much, that he were in the place which Mr. Cartwright holds."

"But if mamma is in want of a man to transact her business, why does she not write to Charles and desire him to return?" said Helen. "The taking his degree a few months later would be of little consequence."

"Charles?" said Fanny with a smile that seemed to mean a great deal.—"Charles is one of the most amiable beings in the world, but the most incapable of undertaking the management of business."

"How can you know anything about it,

Fanny?" said Helen, looking at her with surprise.

"I heard Mr. Cartwright say to mamma, that Charles was quite a boy, though a very charming one."

Helen looked vexed, and Rosalind fixed her eyes upon Fanny as if wishing she would say more.

"In short," continued Fanny, "if Sir Gilbert chooses to cut us, I don't see what mamma *can* do so proper and so right as to make a friend of the clergyman of the parish."

Her two companions answered not a word, and the conversation was brought to a close by Fanny's drawing from her pocket, her bag, and her bosom, sundry scraps of paper, on which many lines of unequal length were scrawled; and on these she appeared inclined to fix her whole attention. This was always considered by Helen and Rosalind as a signal for departure: for then Fanny was in a poetic mood; a word spoken or a movement made by those around her produced symptoms of impatience and suffering which they did not

like to witness. Their absence was indeed a relief: for pretty Fanny, during the few moments of conversation which she had enjoyed at the gate of the shrubbery in the morning, had promised Mr. Cartwright to compose a hymn. To perform this promise to the best of her power, was at this moment the first wish of her heart: for the amiable vicar had already contrived to see some of those numerous offerings to Apollo with which this fairest and freshest of Sapphos beguiled her too abundant leisure. He had pronounced her poetic powers great, and worthy of higher themes than any she had hitherto chosen: it was most natural, therefore, that she should now tax her genius to the utmost, to prove that his first judgment had not been too favourable: so the remainder of that long day passed in melancholy enough *tête-à-tête* between Rosalind and Helen, and in finding rhymes for all the epithets of heaven on the part of Fanny.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. CARTWRIGHT'S LETTER TO HIS COUSIN.—COLONEL HARRINGTON.

THE intelligent reader will not be surprised to hear that Mr. Cartwright did not suffer himself to be long expected in vain on the following morning. Fanny, however, was already in the garden when he arrived; and as it so happened that he saw her as she was hovering near the shrubbery gate, he turned from the carriage-road and approached her.

"How sweetly does youth, when blessed with such a cheek and eye as yours, Miss Fanny, accord with the fresh morning of such a day as this!—I feel," he added, taking her hand and looking in her blushing face, "that my soul never offers adoration more worthy of

my Maker than when inspired by intercourse with such a being as you!"

"Oh! Mr. Cartwright!" cried Fanny, avoiding his glance by fixing her beautiful eyes upon the ground.

"My dearest child! fear not to look at me—fear not to meet the eye of a friend, who would watch over you, Fanny, as the minister of God should watch over that which is best and fairest, to make and keep it holy to the Lord. Let me have that innocent heart in my keeping, my dearest child, and all that is idle, light, and vain shall be banished thence, while heavenward thoughts and holy musings shall take its place. Have you essayed to hymn the praises of your Saviour and your God, Fanny, since we parted yesterday?"

This question was accompanied by an encouraging pat upon her glowing cheek; and Fanny, her heart beating with vanity, shyness, hope, fear, and sundry other feelings, drew the MS. containing a fairly-written transcript of her yesterday's labours from her bosom, and placed it in his hand.

Mr. Cartwright pressed it with a sort of pious fervour to his lips, and enclosing it for greater security in a letter which he drew from his pocket, he laid it carefully within his waistcoat, on the left side of his person, and as near as possible to that part of it appropriated for the residence of the heart.

"This must be examined in private, my beloved child," said he solemnly. "The first attempt to raise such a spirit as yours to God the Saviour in holy song, has to my feelings something as awful in it as the first glad moment of a seraph's wing! . . . . Where is your mother, Fanny?"

"She is in the library."

"Alone?"

"Oh yes! — at least I should think so, for I am sure she is expecting you."

"Farewell, then, my dear young friend!— Pursue your solitary musing walk; and remember, Fanny, that as by your talents you are marked and set apart, as it were, from the great mass of human souls, so will you be looked upon the more fixedly by the searching eye of

God. It is from him you received this talent — keep it sacred to his use, as David did, and great shall be your reward! — Shall I startle your good mother, Fanny, if I enter by the library window?"

"Oh, no! Mr. Cartwright — I am sure mamma would be quite vexed if you always went round that long way up to the door, especially in summer, you know, when the windows are always open."

"Once more, farewell, then!"

Fanny's hand was again tenderly pressed, and they parted.

It would be a needless lengthening of my tale, were I to record all that passed at this and three or four subsequent interviews which took place between the vicar and Mrs. Mowbray on the subject of proving the will. Together with the kindest and most soothing demonstrations of rapidly-increasing friendship and esteem, Mr. Cartwright conveyed to her very sound legal information respecting what it was necessary for her to do. The only difficulty remaining seemed to arise from Mrs. Mowbray's

dislike to apply to any friend in London, either for their hospitality or assistance, during the visit it was necessary she should make there for the completion of the business. This dislike arose from the very disagreeable difficulties which had been thrown in her way by Sir Gilbert Harrington's refusing to act. It would have been very painful to her, as she frankly avowed to her new friend, to announce and explain this refusal to any one; and it was therefore finally arranged between them, that he should give her a letter of introduction to a most excellent and trustworthy friend and relation of his, who was distinguished, as he assured her, for being the most honourable and conscientious attorney in London,—and perhaps, as he added with a sigh, the only one who constantly acted with the fear of the Lord before his eyes.

Gladly did Mrs. Mowbray accede to this proposal, for in truth it removed a world of anxiety from her mind; and urged as much by a wish to prove how very easy it was to be independent of Sir Gilbert, as by the strenuous

advice of Mr. Cartwright to lose no time in bringing the business to a conclusion, she fixed upon the following week for this troublesome but necessary expedition.

It may serve to throw a light upon the kind and anxious interest which the Vicar of Wrexhill took in the affairs of his widowed parishioner, if a copy of his letter to his cousin and friend Mr. Stephen Corbold be inserted.

"TO STEPHEN CORBOLD, ESQ. SOLICITOR, GRAY'S INN, LONDON.

"MY DEAR AND VALUED FRIEND AND COUSIN,

"It has at length pleased God to enable me to prove to you how sincere is the gratitude which I have ever professed for the important service your father conferred upon me by the timely loan of two hundred pounds, when I was, as I believe you know, inconvenienced by a very troublesome claim. It has been a constant matter of regret to me that I should never, through the many years which have since passed, been able to repay it: but, if I mistake not, the

service which I am now able to render you will eventually prove such as fairly to liquidate your claim upon me; and from my knowledge of your pious and honourable feelings, I cannot doubt your being willing to deliver to me my bond for the same, should your advantages from the transaction in hand prove at all commensurate to my expectations."

[Here followed a statement of the widow Mowbray's business in London, with the commentary upon the ways and means which she possessed to carry that, and all other business in which she was concerned, to a satisfactory conclusion, much to the contentment of all those fortunate enough to be employed as her assistants therein. The reverend gentleman then proceeded thus.]

" Nor is this all I would wish to say to you, cousin Stephen, on the subject of the widow Mowbray's affairs, and the advantages which may arise to you from the connexion which equally, of course, for her advantage as for yours, I am desirous of establishing between you.

"I need not tell *you*, cousin Stephen, who, by the blessing of a gracious Saviour upon your worthy endeavours, have already been able in a little way to see what law is,—I need not, I say, point out to you at any great length, how much there must of necessity be to do in the management of an estate and of funds which bring in a net income somewhat exceeding fourteen thousand pounds per annum. Now I learn from my excellent friend Mrs. Mowbray, that her late husband transacted the whole of this business himself; an example which it is impossible, as I need not remark, for his widow and sole legatee to follow. She is quite aware of this, and, by a merciful dispensation of the Most High, her mind appears to be singularly ductile, and liable to receive such impressions as a pious and attentive friend would be able to enforce on all points. In addition to this great and heavy charge, which it has pleased an all-wise God, doubtless for his own good purposes, to lay upon her, she has also the entire management, as legal and sole guardian of a young Irish heiress, of

another prodigiously fine property, consisting, like her own, partly of money in the English funds, and partly in houses and lands in the north part of Ireland. The business connected with the Torrington property is therefore at this moment, as well as everything concerning the widow Mowbray's affairs, completely without any agent whatever; and I am not without hopes, cousin Stephen, that by the blessing of God to usward, I may be enabled to obtain the same for you.

"I know the pious habit of your mind, cousin, and that you, like myself, never see any remarkable occurrence without clearly tracing therein the immediate finger of God. I confess that throughout the whole of this affair;—the sudden death of the late owner of this noble fortune; the singular will he left, by which it all has become wholly and solely at the disposal of his excellent widow; the hasty and not overwise determination to renounce the executorship on the part of this petulant Sir Gilbert Harrington; the accident, or rather series of accidents, by which I have become at once and

so unexpectedly, the chief stay, support, comfort, consolation, and adviser of this amiable but very helpless lady;—throughout the whole of this, I cannot, I say, but observe the gracious providence of my Lord, who wills that I should obtain power and mastery even over the things of this world, worthless though they be, cousin Stephen, when set in comparison with those of the world to come. It is my clear perception of the will of God in this matter which renders me willing,—yea, ardent in my desire to obtain influence over the Mowbray family. They are not all, however, equally amiable to the wholesome guidance I would afford them: on the contrary, it is evident to me that the youngest child is the only one on whom the Lord is at present disposed to pour forth a saving light. Nevertheless I will persevere. Peradventure the hearts of the disobedient may in the end be turned to the wisdom of the just; and we know right well who it is that can save from all danger, even though a man went to sea without art; a tempting of Providence which would in my case be most criminal,—for great in that

respect has been the mercy of the Lord to his servant, giving unto me that light which is needful to guide us through the rocks and shoals for ever scattered amidst worldly affairs.

"Thus much have I written to you, cousin Stephen, with my own hand, that you might fully comprehend the work that lies before us. But I will not with pen and ink write more unto you, for I trust I shall shortly see you, and that we shall speak face to face.

"I am now and ever, cousin Stephen, your loving kinsman and Christian friend,

"William Jacob Cartwright.

"Wrexhill Vicarage, 9th July, 1834."

"P.S. Since writing the above, the widow Mowbray has besought me to instruct *the gentleman who is to act as her agent* to obtain lodgings for her in a convenient quarter of the town; and therefore this letter will precede her. Nor can she indeed set forth till you shall have written in return to inform her whereunto her equipage must be instructed to drive. Remember, cousin, that the apartments be suit-

able; and in choosing them recollect that it is neither you nor I who will pay for the same. Farewell. If I mistake not, the mercy of the Lord overshadows you, my cousin."

Poor Mrs. Mowbray would have rejoiced exceedingly had it been possible for her kind and ever-ready adviser and friend to accompany her to London; but as he did not himself propose this, she would not venture to do it, and only asked him, such as an obedient child might ask a parent, whether he thought she ought to go attended only by a man and maid servant, or whether she might have the comfort of taking one of her daughters with her.

Mr. Cartwright looked puzzled; indeed the question involved considerable difficulties. It was by no means the vicar's wish to appear harsh or disagreeable in his enactments; yet neither did he particularly desire that the eldest Miss Mowbray should be placed in circumstances likely to give her increased influence over her mother: and as to Fanny, his conscience reproached him for having for an

instant conceived the idea of permitting one to whom the elective finger of grace had so recently pointed to be removed so far from his fostering care.

After a few moments of silent consideration, he replied,

"No! my dearest lady, you ought not to be without the soothing presence of a child; and if I might advise you on the subject, I should recommend your being accompanied by Miss Helen,—both because, as being the eldest, she might expect this preference, and because, likewise, I should deem it prudent to remove her from the great risk and danger of falling into the society of your base and injurious enemy during your absence."

"You are quite right about that, as I 'm sure you are about everything, Mr. Cartwright. I really would not have Helen see more of Sir Gilbert's family for the world! She has such wild romantic notions about old friendships being better than new ones, that I am sure it would be the way to make terrible disputes between us. She has never yet known the misery

of having an old friend turn against her,—nor the comfort, Mr. Cartwright, of finding a new one sent by Providence to supply his place!"

"My dearest lady! I shall ever praise and bless the dispensation that has placed me near you during this great trial;—and remember always, that those whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth!"

"Ah! Mr. Cartwright, I fear that I have not been hitherto sufficiently mindful of this, and that I have repined where I ought to have blessed. But I trust that a more Christian spirit is now awakened within me, and that henceforward, with your aid, and by the blessing of God upon my humble endeavours, I may become worthy of the privilege I enjoy as being one of your congregation."

"May the Lord hear, receive, record, and bless that hope!" cried the vicar fervently, seizing her hand and kissing it with holy zeal.

Mrs. Mowbray coloured slightly; but feeling ashamed of the weak and unworthy feeling that caused this, she made a strong effort to recover from the sort of embarrassment his

action caused, and said, with as much ease as she could assume,

" Rosalind and Fanny are both very young and very giddy, Mr. Cartwright. May I hope that during my short absence—which I shall make as short as possible,—may I hope, my kind friend, that you will look in upon them every day?"

" You cannot doubt it!—what is there I would not do to spare you an anxious thought! —They are young and thoughtless, particularly your ward. Miss Torrington is just the girl, I think, to propose some wild frolic—perhaps another visit to Sir Gilbert; and your sweet Fanny is too young and has too little authority to prevent it."

" Good Heaven! do you think so? Then what can I do?"

" An idea has struck me, my dear friend, which I will mention to you with all frankness, certain that if you disapprove it, you will tell me so with an openness and sincerity equal to my own.—I think that if my staid and quiet daughter Henrietta were to pass the short

interval of your absence here, you might be quite sure that nothing gay or giddy would be done:—her delicate health and sober turn of mind preclude the possibility of this; — and her being here would authorise my daily visit."

"There is nothing in the world I should like so well," replied Mrs. Mowbray. "Anything likely to promote an intimacy between my young people and a daughter brought up by you must be indeed a blessing to us. Shall I call upon her?—or shall I write the invitation?"

"You are very kind, dear lady!—very heavenly-minded!—but there is no sort of necessity that you should take the trouble of doing either. I will mention to Henrietta your most flattering wish that she should be here during your absence; and, believe me, she will be most happy to comply with it."

"I shall be very grateful to her.—But will it not be more agreeable for her, and for us also, that she should come immediately? I cannot go before Monday—this is Thursday; might she not come to us to-morrow?"

" How thoughtful is that !—how like yourself !—Certainly it will be pleasanter for her, and I will therefore bring her."

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of a servant with a note. But for the better understanding its effect both on the lady and gentleman, it will be necessary to recount one or two circumstances which had occurred to the anti-Cartwright party in the Mowbray family, subsequent to their visit to Oakley.

A few days after that which witnessed poor Helen's disgrace, after entering the drawing-room and receiving a hint from her mother (whom she found there in close conclave with the vicar) that she had better take her morning walk, it happened that she and Rosalind, as they were earnestly discoursing of their yesterday's visit, and enjoying the perfect shade of a lane leading to the village of Wrexhill, perceived a horseman approaching them as slowly as it was possible to make a fine horse walk. In the next moment, however, something ap-

peared to have pricked the sides of his intent, as well as those of his horse; for with a bound or two he was close to them, and in the next instant dismounted and by their side.

The gentleman proved to be Colonel Harrington, who immediately declared, with very soldierly frankness, that he had been riding through every avenue leading to Mowbray Park, in the hope of being fortunate enough to meet them.

Rosalind smiled; while Helen, without knowing too well what she said, answered with a deep blush, "You are very kind."

Colonel Harrington carefully tied up his reins and so arranged them as to leave no danger of their getting loose; then giving his steed a slight cut with his riding-whip, the obedient animal set off at an easy trot for Oakley.

"He knows his way, at least, as well as I do," said the colonel. "It is my father's old hunter, and I selected him on purpose, that if I were lucky enough to meet you, I might have no trouble about getting rid of him. And

now tell me, Helen, how did your mother bear the answer my father sent to her note?"

"An answer from Sir Gilbert?—and to a note from my mother?" said Helen. "Alas! it was kept secret from me; and therefore, Colonel Harrington, I had rather you should not talk of it to me."

"It is hardly reasonable that you should insist upon my keeping secret what I have to tell you, Helen, because others are less communicative. The letters he receives and writes are surely my father's business either to impart or conceal, as he thinks best; and he is extremely anxious to learn your opinion respecting your mother's letter, and his answer to it. He certainly did not imagine that they had been kept secret from you."

"Indeed I have never heard of either."

"Do you suppose, then, that she has mentioned them to no one?"

Helen did not immediately reply, but Rosalind did. "I am very particularly mistaken, Colonel Harrington," said she, "if the Re-

verend William Jacob Cartwright, vicar of Wrexhill, and privy counsellor at Mowbray Park, did not superintend the writing of the one, and the reading of the other."

"Do you really think so, Miss Torrington? What do you say, Helen? do you believe this to have been the case?"

"He is very often at the Park," replied Helen.

"But do you think it possible that Mrs. Mowbray would communicate to him what she would conceal from you?" said Colonel Harrington.

This question was also left unanswered by Helen; but Rosalind again undertook to reply. "You will think me a very interfering person, I am afraid, Colonel Harrington," said she; "but many feelings keep Helen silent which do not influence me; and as far as I am capable of judging, it is extremely proper, and perhaps important, that Sir Gilbert should know that this holy vicar never passes a day without finding or making an excuse for calling at the Park. I can hardly tell how it is, but it cer-

tainly does happen that these visits generally take place when we—that is, Helen and I—are not in the house; but . . . to confess my sins and make a clear breast at once, I will tell you what I have never yet told Helen, and that is, that I have ordered my maid to find out, if she can, when Mr. Cartwright comes. He slipped in, however, through the library window twice yesterday, so it is possible that he may sometimes make good an entry without being observed; for it is impossible that my Judy can be always on the watch, though she is so fond of performing her needlework in that pretty trellised summer-house in the Park."

"What an excellent vidette you would make, Miss Torrington," said the young man, laughing. "But will you tell me, sincerely and without any shadow of jesting, why it is that you have been so anxious to watch the movements of this reverend gentleman?"

"If I talk on the subject at all," she replied, "it will certainly be without any propensity to jesting; for I have seldom felt less inclined to be merry than while watching the increasing

influence of Mr. Cartwright over Mrs. Mowbray and Fanny. It was because I remarked that they never mentioned his having called, when I knew he had been there, that I grew anxious to learn, if possible, how constant his visits had become; and the result of my *espionage* is, that no day passes without a visit."

"But what makes you speak of this as of an evil, Miss Torrington?"

"That is more than I have promised to tell you," replied Rosalind; "but, as we *have* become so very confidential, I have no objection to tell you all—and that, remember, for the especial use of Sir Gilbert, who perhaps, if he knew all that I guess, would *not* think he was doing right to leave Mrs. Mowbray in such hands."

"And what then, Miss Torrington, is there, *as you guess*, against this gentleman?"

Rosalind for an instant looked puzzled; but, by the rapidity with which she proceeded after she began, the difficulty seemed to arise solely from not knowing what to say first. "There is against him," said she, "the having hurried away from hearing the will read to the pre-

sence of Mrs. Mowbray, and not only announcing its contents to her with what might well be called indecent haste, considering that there were others to whom the task more fitly belonged, and who would have performed it too, had they not been thus forestalled;—not only did he do this, but he basely, and I do believe most falsely, gave her to understand that her son, the generous, disinterested, warm-hearted Charles Mowbray, had manifested displeasure at it. Further, he has turned the head of poor little Fanny, by begging copies of her verses to send — Heaven knows where; and he moreover has, I am sure, persuaded Mrs. Mowbray to think that my peerless Helen is in fault for something — Heaven knows what. He has likewise, as your account of those secret letters renders certain, dared to step between an affectionate mother and her devoted child, to destroy their dear and close union by hateful and poisonous mystery. He has also fomented the unhappy and most silly schism between your pettish father and my petted guardian; and moreover, with all his far-famed beauty and

saint-like benignity of aspect, his soft crafty eyes dare not look me in the face. And twelfthly and lastly, I hate him."

"After this, Miss Torrington," said the colonel, laughing, "no man assuredly could be sufficiently hardy to say a word in his defence;— and, all jesting apart," he added very seriously, "I do think you have made out a very strong case against him. If my good father sees this growing intimacy between the Vicarage and the Park with the same feelings that you do, I really think it might go farther than any other consideration towards inducing him to rescind his refusal—for he *has* positively refused to act as executor—and lead him at once and for ever to forget the unreasonable cause of anger he has conceived against your mother, Helen."

"Then let him know it without an hour's delay," said Helen. "Dear Colonel Harrington! why did you let your horse go? Walk you must, but let it be as fast as you can, and let your father understand exactly everything that Rosalind has told you; for though I

should hardly have ventured to say as much myself, I own that I think she is not much mistaken in any of her conclusions."

"And do you follow her, Helen, up to her twelfthly and lastly? Do you too *hate* this reverend gentleman?"

Helen sighed. "I hope not, Colonel Harrington," she replied; "I should be sorry to believe myself capable of hating, but surely I do not love him."

The young ladies, in their eagerness to set the colonel off on his road to Oakley, were unconsciously, or rather most obliviously, guilty of the indecorum of accompanying him at least half the distance; and at last it was Rosalind, and not the much more shy and timid Helen, who became aware of the singularity of the proceeding.

"And where may *we* be going, I should like to know?" she said, suddenly stopping short. "Helen! is it the fashion for the Hampshire ladies to escort home the gentlemen they chance to meet in their walks? We never do that in my country."

Colonel Harrington looked positively angry, and Helen blushed celestial rosy red, but soon recovered herself, and said, with that species of frankness which at once disarms quizzing,

"It is very true, Rosalind; we seem to be doing a very strange thing: but we have had a great deal to say that was really important; yet nothing so much so, as leading Colonel Harrington to his father with as little delay as possible.—But now I think we have said all. Good-b'ye, Colonel Harrington: I need not tell you how grateful we shall all be if you can persuade Sir Gilbert to restore us all to favour."

"The all is but one, Helen; but the doing so I now feel to be very important. Farewell! Take care of yourselves; for I will not vex you, Helen, by turning back again. Farewell!"

The letter which interrupted the tête-à-tête between Mrs. Mowbray and the vicar was an immediate consequence of this conversation, and was as follows:—

"MADAM,

"Upon a maturer consideration of the possible effects to the family of my late friend which my refusal to act as his executor may produce, I am willing, notwithstanding my repugnance to the office, to perform the duties of it, and hereby desire to revoke my late refusal to do so.

(Signed)

"GILBERT HARRINGTON.

"Oakley, July 12th, 1833."

"Thank Heaven," exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray as soon as she had read the note,—"Thank Heaven that I have no longer any occasion to submit myself to the caprices of any man! — And yet," she added, putting the paper into Mr. Cartwright's hands, "I suppose it will be best for me to accept his reluctant and ungracious offer?"

Mr. Cartwright took the paper and perused it with great attention, and more than once. At length he said,

"I trust I did not understand you. What

was it you said, dearest Mrs. Mowbray, respecting this most insulting communication?"

"I hardly know, Mr. Cartwright, what I said," replied Mrs. Mowbray, colouring. "How can I know what to say to a person who can treat a woman in my painful situation with such cruel caprice, such unfeeling inconsistency?"

"Were I you, my valued friend, I should make the matter very easy, for I should say nothing to him."

"Nothing?—Do you mean that you would not answer the letter?"

"Certainly: that is what I should recommend as the only mode of noticing it, consistently with the respect you owe yourself."

"I am sure you are quite right," replied Mrs. Mowbray, looking relieved from a load of difficulty.

"It certainly does not deserve an answer," said she, "and I am sure I should not in the least know what to say to him."

"Then let us treat the scroll as it does deserve to be treated," said the vicar with a smile. "Let the indignant wind bear it back

to the face of the hard-hearted and insulting writer!"

And so saying, he eagerly tore the paper into minute atoms, and appeared about to consign them to the conveyance he mentioned, but suddenly checked himself, and with thoughtful consideration for the gardener added,

"But no! we will not disfigure your beautiful lawn by casting these fragments upon it: I will dispose of them on the other side of the fence.

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. MOWBRAY'S DEPARTURE FOR TOWN.—AN EXTEMPORARY PRAYER.

It was about nine o'clock in the evening of this same day, that Mr. Cartwright was seen approaching across the lawn towards the drawing-room windows,—and that not only by Judy, but by the whole family, who were assembled there and preparing to take their tea. His daughter Henrietta was on his arm; yet still she rather followed than walked with him, so evidently did she hang back, while he as evidently endeavoured to quicken his pace and draw her forward.

The eyes of the whole party were attracted to the windows. Mrs. Mowbray and Fanny, approaching different sashes, each stepped out to welcome them; while Miss Torrington and

Helen were content to watch the meeting from their places on a sofa.

"Did you ever see a man drive a pig to market, Helen?" said Rosalind. "In my country they do it so much more cleverly! for, look you, if that man were half as clever as he thinks himself, he would just go behind the young lady and pull her backwards."

"I am not quite sure that the scheme would answer in this case," replied Helen. "Look at the expression of her face, and I think you will perceive that nothing but a very straightforward pull could induce her to approach at all."

"Perhaps she is disgusted at her odious father's presumption and forwardness?" cried Rosalind, starting up. "If that be so, I will patronise her.—Poor thing! look at her eyes; I am positive she has been weeping."

With this impression, Miss Torrington stepped forward, and, as the party entered, greeted the young lady very kindly: though she hardly appeared to perceive that her father entered with her.

She received in return a look which, with all her acuteness, she found it extremely difficult to interpret. There was a strong and obvious expression of surprise in it; and then, in the faint attempt at a smile about the corners of the mouth, — which attempt, however, was finally abortive, — Rosalind fancied that she traced a movement of gratitude, though not of pleasure; but over every feature a settled gloom seemed to hang, like a dark veil, obscuring, though not quite hiding every emotion.

The difficulty of understanding why and wherefore she looked as she did, was quite enough, with such a disposition as Rosalind's, to make her an object of interest; and therefore, when Mrs. Mowbray made her the speech that she was expressly brought to hear, expressive of hope that she would have the great kindness to console that part of her family who were to remain at home by affording them the pleasure of her company, Rosalind relieved her from the immediate necessity of replying, by saying gaily,

"She will and she must, Mrs. Mowbray, for we will take her prisoner; but I will promise, as far as I am concerned, that her durance shall be as gentle as possible."

It was now the vicar's turn to look astonished, which he certainly did in no small degree, and ran some risk of destroying the favourable impression which his daughter's look of misery had created, by saying, in the sweet tone that Miss Torrington relished so little,

"Henrietta, my love—I trust you will be sensible of, and grateful for, the amiable and condescending kindness of this young lady."

What the gloomy Henrietta answered, Rosalind did not stay to hear; for by a movement of that impatience with which she always listened to all that Mr. Cartwright spoke, she turned from him and walked out of the window. She only stayed, however, long enough to gather a bunch of geranium blossoms, which she put into the hand of Henrietta as she placed herself beside her on re-entering.

"Are they not superb, Miss Cartwright?"

Miss Cartwright again answered by a look which once more set all Rosalind's ingenuity at defiance. It now spoke awakened interest, and an almost eager desire to look at and listen to her; but the heavy gloom remained, while her almost total silence gave her an appearance of reserve greatly at variance with the expression which, for a moment at least, she had read in her eyes.

Helen was now, in full assembly, informed for the first time that she was to attend her mother to town. Had this been told her, as everything was wont to be, in the dear seclusion of her mother's dressing-room, she would have hailed the news with joy and gratitude, and believed that it predicted a return of all the happiness she had lost: but now the effect was wholly different; and though she mastered herself sufficiently to send back the tears before they reached her eyes, and to declare, in the gentle voice of genuine unaffected obedience, that she should be delighted if she could be useful to her, the manner of the communication sank deeply and painfully into her heart.

An answer having arrived by return of post from Stephen Corbold, Esq. solicitor, stating that commodious apartments were secured in Wimpole-street, and himself ready, body and spirit, to do the lady's bidding, Mrs. Mowbray fixed on the following day for her journey. Miss Cartwright gave one mutter beyond a tacit consent to remain at the Park during her absence, and the party separated; Fanny however declaring, as she wrapped a shawl of her mother's about her head, that she must enjoy the delicious moonlight by accompanying the vicar and his daughter as far as the Park gates.

"And return alone, Fanny?" said her mother.

"Why not, dear lady?" replied Mr. Cartwright. "Her eye will not be raised to the lamp of night without her heart's rising also in a hymn to her Lord and Saviour; and I am willing to believe that her remaining for a few moments beside her pastor and her friend, while under its soft influence, will not be likely to make her thoughts wander in a wrong direction."

" Oh no, Mr. Cartwright," replied the mother; " I am sure, if you think it right, she shall go."

At this moment Miss Torrington was giving a farewell shake of the hand to Henrietta; when, instead of receiving from her an answering " Good night!" something very like a groan smote her ear.

" How very strange!" she exclaimed aloud, after a silence that lasted till the vicar, with Fanny leaning on his arm, and his sulky daughter following, had half traversed the lawn towards the gate that opened upon the drive.

" What is strange, Miss Torrington?" said Mrs. Mowbray.

" Almost everything I see and hear, ma'am," replied the young lady.

" At what hour are we to set off to-morrow, mamma?" inquired Helen.

" At ten o'clock, my dear. You had better give your orders to Curtis to-night, Helen, as to what she is to put up for you. I hope we shall not be obliged to remain in town above two or three days."

"If you have anything to do in your room to-night, Helen, it is time to betake yourself to it," observed Rosalind; "for," looking at her watch, "it is very near midnight, though Miss Fanny Mowbray is walking in the Park. — Good night, Mrs. Mowbray." But Mrs. Mowbray did not appear to hear her.

"Good night, mamma," said Helen, approaching to kiss her.

She received a very cold salute upon her forehead, and a "Good night, Helen," in a tone that answered to it.

Rosalind took the arm of her friend within hers as they left the room together, and a silent pressure spoke her sympathy; but neither of them uttered a word that night, either concerning Mr. Cartwright's increasing influence, or Mrs. Mowbray's continued coldness to Helen. They both of them felt more than they wished to speak.

The following morning brought Mr. Cartwright and his daughter again to the Park a few minutes before the post-horses arrived for Mrs. Mowbray's carriage, and in a few minutes

more everything was ready for the departure of the travellers. Helen gave a farewell embrace to Fanny and Rosalind; while the attentive vicar stepped into the carriage before Mrs. Mowbray entered it, to see that as many windows were up and as many windows down as she wished, and likewise for the purpose of placing a small volume in the side pocket next the place she was to occupy. He then returned to her side, and as he handed her in, whispered, while he pressed her hand,

"Do not fatigue yourself with talking, my dear friend: it is a great while since you have taken a journey even so long as this. In the pocket next you I have placed a little volume that I wish — oh, how ardently! — that you would read with attention. Will you promise me this?"

"I will," replied Mrs. Mowbray, deeply affected by his earnestness. — "God bless you!"

"The Lord watch over you!" responded Mr. Cartwright with a sigh. He then retreated a step, and Helen sprang hastily into the car-

riage without assistance; the door was closed, and before the equipage reached the lodges, Mrs. Mowbray had plunged into a disquisition on regeneration and faith—the glory of the new birth—and the assured damnation of all who cannot, or do not, attain thereto.

Meanwhile the party left under the shade of the portico looked at each other as if to inquire what they were to do next. On all occasions of morning departure there is generally a certain degree of *désœuvrement* left with those who remain behind. In general, however, this is soon got over, except by a desperate idler or a very mournful residuary guest; but on the present occasion the usual occupations of the parties were put completely out of joint, and Rosalind, at least, was exceedingly well disposed to exclaim —

> ——— "Accursed spite,
> That ever I was born to set it right!"

She remained stationary for a few minutes, hoping and expecting that the reverend gentleman would depart: but as this did not happen,

she quietly re-entered the house and retired to her own dressing-room.

Fanny then made a motion to enter also, but took very hospitable care that it should include both her companions. Mr. Cartwright spoke not of going—he even led the way to the library himself, and having closed the door and put down the ever-open sash windows, he turned to Fanny, and, with a smile that might have accompanied a proposal to sing or dance, said,

"My dear Miss Fanny! does not your heart feel full of kind and tender wishes for the safety of your beloved mother during her absence from you?"

"It does indeed!" said Fanny, shaking back her chesnut ringlets.

"Then should we not," rejoined the vicar, assisting her action by gently putting back her redundant curls with his own hand,—"should we not, my dear child, implore a blessing upon her from the only source from whence it can come?—should we not ask of her Lord and Saviour to take her into his holy keeping, and guard her from every ill?"

"Oh yes," replied Fanny, with affectionate earnestness, but by no means understanding his immediate purpose,—"Oh yes, Mr. Cartwright; I am sure I never pray so heartily as when praying for mamma."

"Then let us kneel before the throne of Jesus and the Lamb!" said he, placing a chair before her, and kneeling down himself at the one that was next to it. Fanny instantly obeyed, covering her face with her hands, while her young heart beat with a timid and most truly pious feeling of fear lest the act was not performed with suitable deference; for hitherto her private devotions had been performed in strict obedience to the solemn and explicit words of Scripture—"*When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*"

But though conscious that the mode of prayer in which she was now so unexpectedly invited to join was very unlike what she was used to, her unbounded love and admiration

for Mr. Cartwright rendered it absolutely impossible for her to conceive it wrong, and she prepared herself to pray with all the fervour of her young and ardent spirit.

There was a moment's pause, during which a look was exchanged between the father and daughter unseen by Fanny; but had it met her eye, it would only have appeared to her as a mystery that she was incapable of comprehending. Had Rosalind caught a sight of it, she might perhaps have fancied that the glance of the father spoke command, accompanied by direful threatenings, while that of his daughter betrayed disgust and bitterest contempt, mingled with fear.

Mr. Cartwright began, almost in a whisper, to utter his extemporary prayer. It first invoked a blessing on *the little knot of united hearts* that now offered their homage to the Lord, and then proceeded to ask, in flowing periods, for exemption from all dangers likely to beset travellers by land for "our beloved sister in the Lord who is this day gone forth." In a tone somewhat more loud, he went on to

implore especial grace for the not yet awakened soul of the child she led with her; and then, his rich and powerful voice resounding through the room, his eyes raised to the ceiling, and his clasped and extended hands stretched out before him, he burst into an ecstasy of enthusiastic rantings, in which he besought blessings on the head of Fanny.

It is impossible to repeat such language as Mr. Cartwright and those who resemble him think fit to use in their extemporary devotions, without offending against that sensitive horror of profanation which happily still continues to be one of the strongest feelings in the minds of Christians not converted—*i. e.* perverted from the solemn reverence our church enjoins in the utterance of every word by which we venture to approach the Deity. To such, the unweighed flippant use of those momentous words "LET US PRAY," followed, as they often are, by turgid rantings, and familiar appeals to the most High God, in volumes of rapid, careless wordiness, is perhaps the most offensive outrage to which their religious feelings can be exposed.

One might be almost tempted to believe that the sectarians who, rejecting the authorised forms in which the bishops and fathers of our church have cautiously, reverently, and succinctly rehearsed the petitions which the Scriptures permit man to offer to his Creator;—one might, I say, almost be tempted to believe that these men have so misunderstood the Word of God, as to read:—USE *vain repetitions as the Heathen do, for they* SHALL BE *heard for their much speaking.* But this "much speaking," with all its irreverent accompaniments of familiar phraseology, is an abomination to those who have preserved their right to sit within the sacred pale of our established church; and as it is among such that I wish to find my readers, I will avoid, as much as possible, offending them by unnecessary repetitions of Mr. Cartwright's rhapsodies, preserving only so much of their substance as may be necessary to them aking his character fully understood.

While imploring Heaven to soften the heart of poor Fanny, who knelt weeping beside him

like a Niobe, he rehearsed her talents and good qualities, earnestly praying that they might not be turned by the Prince of Darkness into a snare.

"Let not her gift—her shining gift of poesy, O Lord! lead her, as it has so often done others, to the deepest pit of hell! Let not the gentle and warm affections of her heart cling to those that shall carry her soul, with their own, down to the worm that dieth not, and to the fire that cannot be quenched! Rather, O Lord and Saviour, fix thou her love upon those who will seek it in thy holy name. May she, O Lord! know to distinguish between the true and the false, the holy and the unholy!"

"Amen!" was here uttered by Henrietta, but in so low a whisper that only her father's ear caught it. He paused for half a moment, and then continued with still-increasing zeal, so that his voice shook and tears fell from his eyes.

Fanny was fully aware of all this strong emotion; for though she uncovered not her own streaming eyes, she could not mistake the trem-

bling voice that pronounced its fervent blessing on her amidst sobs.

Meanwhile Miss Torrington, who had seated herself before a book in her dressing-room, began to think that she was not acting very kindly towards Fanny, who, she knew, was so nearly childish in her manners as to render the entertaining company a very disagreeable task to her.

"Poor little soul!" she exclaimed; "between the manna of the father, and the crabbishness of the daughter, she will be done to death if I go not to her rescue." So she closed her book and hastened to the library.

The sound she heard on approaching the door startled her, and she paused to listen a moment before she entered; for not having the remotest idea that it was the voice of prayer, she really believed that some one had been taken ill,—and the notion of convulsions, blended with the recollection of Henrietta's sickly appearance, took possession of her fancy. She determined, however, to enter; but turned the lock with a very nervous hand,—and on

beholding the scene which the opening door displayed, felt startled, awed, and uncertain whether to advance or retreat.

She immediately met Henrietta's eye, which turned towards her as she opened the door, and its expression at once explained the nature of the ceremony she so unexpectedly witnessed. Contempt and bitter scorn shot from it as she slowly turned it towards her father; and a smile of pity succeeded, as she mournfully shook her head, when, for a moment, she fixed her glance upon the figure of Fanny. Had the poor girl for whose especial sake this very unclerical rhapsody was uttered—had she been a few years older, and somewhat more advanced in the power of judging human actions, she must have been struck by the remarkable change which the entrance of Rosalind produced in the language and manner of the vicar. He did not for an instant suspend the flow of his eloquence, but the style of it altered altogether.

"Bless her, Lord! bless this lovely and

beloved one!" were the words which preceded the opening of the door, accompanied by the sobbings of vehement emotion. — "Bless all this worthy family, and all sorts and conditions of men; and so lead them home" .... &c. were those which followed,—uttered, too, with very decent sobriety and discretion.

Rosalind, however, was not quite deceived by this, though far from guessing how perfectly indecent and profane had been the impassioned language and vehement emotion which preceded her appearance.

After the hesitation of a moment, she closed the door, and walking up to the side of Fanny, stood beside her for the minute and a half which it took Mr. Cartwright to bring his harangue to a conclusion. He then ceased, rose from his knees, and bowed to the intruder with an air so meek and sanctified, but yet with such a downcast avoidance of her eye withal, that Rosalind shrank from him with ill-concealed dislike, and would instantly have left the room, but that she did not choose again to leave Fanny, who still continued kneeling, beside

her, to a repetition of the scene she had interrupted.

"Fanny!" she said, in an accent a little approaching to impatience.

But Fanny heeded her not. Vexed and disgusted at this display of a devotion so unlike the genuine, unaffected, well-regulated piety in which she had been herself brought up, she repeated her call,—adding, as she laid her hand lightly on her shoulder,

"This is not the sort of worship which your excellent father, or good Mr. Wallace either, would have approved."

Fanny now rose from her knees, and the cause of her not doing so before became evident. Her face was as pale as ashes, and traces of violent weeping were visible on her swollen eyelids.

"Good Heaven, Fanny! what can have affected you thus? — What, sir, have you been saying to produce so terrible an effect on Miss Mowbray? The prayers of the church, in the discipline of which she has been most carefully bred up, produce no such

paroxysms as these, Mr. Cartwright.—Come with me, Fanny, and do endeavour to conquer this extraordinary vehemence of emotion."

Fanny took her arm; but she trembled so violently that she could scarcely stand.

"Mr. Cartwright," said Rosalind with a burst of indignation that she could not control, "I must beg of you not to repeat this species of experiment on the feelings of this young lady during the absence of her mother. At her return, she will of course decide upon your continuance, or discontinuance, in the office you have been pleased to assume; but, till then, I must beg, in her name, that we may have no more of this."

"Oh! Rosalind!" exclaimed Fanny, while a fresh shower of tears burst from her eyes, "how can you speak so!"

"Tell me, my dear young lady," said Mr. Cartwright, addressing Miss Torrington in a voice of the gentlest kindness, "did good Mrs. Mowbray, on leaving home, place Miss Fanny under your care?"

"No, sir, she did not," replied Rosalind,

a crimson flush of anger and indignation mounting to her cheeks; "but, being considerably older than Fanny, I deem it my duty to prevent her if possible from again becoming an actor in such a scene as this."

Fanny withdrew her arm, and clasping her hands together, again exclaimed, "Oh! Rosalind!"

"Do not agitate yourself, my good child," said the vicar; "I shall never suspect you of that hardening of the heart which would lead you to be of those who wish to banish the voice of prayer from the roof that shelters you. Nor shall I," he continued meekly, but firmly, —"nor shall I consider myself justified in remitting that care and attention which I promised your excellent mother to bestow on you, because this unhappy young person lifts her voice against the holy duties of my calling. I shall return to you in the evening, and then, I trust, we shall again raise our voices together in praise and prayer."

So saying, Mr. Cartwright took his hat and departed.

The three young ladies were left standing, but not in one group. Miss Cartwright, as soon as released from her kneeling position, had approached a window, and was assiduously paring her nails; Rosalind fixed her eyes upon the floor, and seemed to be revolving some question that puzzled her; and Fanny, after the interval of a moment, left the room.

Miss Torrington approached the window, and said coldly, but civilly, "I am sorry, Miss Cartwright, to have spoken so sternly to your father,—or rather, for the cause which led me to do so,—but I really considered it as my duty."

"Oh! pray, ma'am, do not apologise to me about it."

"I do not wish to offer an apology for doing what I believe to be right; but only to express my sorrow to a guest, in the house that is my home, for having been obliged to say anything that might make her feel uncomfortable."

"I do assure you, Miss Torrington," replied the vicar's daughter, "that my feelings are

very particularly independent of any circumstance, accident, or event that may affect Mr. Cartwright . . . . my father."

"Indeed!" said Rosalind, fixing on her a glance that seemed to invite her confidence.

"Indeed!" repeated Henrietta, quietly continuing the occupation furnished by her fingers' ends, but without showing any inclination to accept the invitation.

Rosalind was disconcerted. The singularity of Miss Cartwright's manner piqued her curiosity, and though by no means inclined to form a party with her against her father, she had seen enough to convince her that they were far from being on very affectionate terms together. A feeling of pity too, though for sorrows and sufferings suggested chiefly by her own imagination, gave her a kind-hearted inclination for more intimate acquaintance; but she began to suspect that the wish for this was wholly on her side, and not shared in any degree by her companion.

Chilled by this idea, and out of spirits from the prospect of being daily exposed to Mr.

Cartwright's visits, Rosalind prepared to leave the room; but good-nature, as was usual with her, prevailed over every other feeling, and before she reached the door, she turned and said,

"Is there anything, Miss Cartwright, that I can offer for your amusement? The books of the day are chiefly in our dressing-rooms, I believe—and I have abundance of new music—and in this room I can show you where to find a very splendid collection of engravings."

"I wish for nothing of the kind, I am much obliged to you."

"Shall I send Fanny to you? Perhaps, notwithstanding the ocean of tears you have seen her shed, she would prove a much more cheerful companion than I could do at this moment."

"I do not wish for a cheerful companion," said Henrietta.

"Is there anything, then, that I can do," resumed Rosalind, half smiling, "that may assist you in getting rid of the morning?"

"You may sit with me yourself."

"May I?—Well, then, so I will. I assure you that I only thought of going because it appeared to me that you did not particularly desire my company."

"To say the truth, Miss Torrington, I do not think there is anything on earth particularly worth desiring; but your conversation may perhaps be amongst the most endurable. Besides, it is agreeable to look at you."

"You are very civil," replied Rosalind, laughing. "Perhaps you would like me to hold a nosegay in my hand, or to put on a bonnet and feathers, that I might be still better worth looking at."

"No.—If I had a bunch of flowers before my eyes, I should not want you: no woman can be so beautiful as a collection of flowers. But I shall do very well, I dare say. Nothing, you know, lasts very long."

"Your father, then, I presume, has taught your thoughts, Miss Cartwright, to fix themselves altogether on a future and a better world."

"As to a future world, Miss Torrington, I

must have better authority than Mr. Cartwright's before I pretend to know anything about it: but if there be another, I have very little doubt, I confess, that it must be a better one."

"We are taught by the highest authority to believe it will be so, for those who deserve it. But I hope your distaste for that which we enjoy at present does not arise from its having been unkind to you?"

"When I was a child," answered Henrietta, "I had a kind of sickly longing for kindness; but now that I am older and wiser, I cannot say that I think kindness or unkindness are matters of much consequence."

"That indeed is a feeling that must put one speedily either above or below sorrow."

"I am below it."

"It would be just as easy to say, above, Miss Cartwright; and if you really have reached to a state of such stoical indifference, I rather wonder you should not feel that it sets you above all the poor sensitive souls whom you

must see longing for a smile, and trembling at a frown."

"Because, Miss Torrington, I have constantly felt that in approaching this state of mind I have been gradually sinking lower and lower in my own estimation. I am become so hatefully familiar with sin and wickedness, that I perfectly loathe myself—though assuredly it has ended by giving me a very pre-eminent degree of indifference concerning all that may hereafter happen to me."

"Is it in your own person," said Rosalind jestingly, "that you have become thus familiar with sin?"

"No. It is in that of my father."

Rosalind started. "You talk strangely to me, Miss Cartwright," said she gravely; "and if you are playing upon my credulity or curiosity, I must submit to it. But if there be any serious meaning in what you say, it would be more generous if you would permit me to understand you. I believe you are aware that I do not esteem Mr. Cartwright; an avowal

which delicacy would have certainly prevented my making to you, had you not given me reason to suspect ——"

"—That I do not very greatly esteem him either," said Henrietta, interrupting her.

"Exactly so: and as I am deeply interested for the welfare and happiness of the family amongst whom he seems disposed to insinuate himself upon terms of very particular intimacy, I should consider it as a great kindness if you would tell me what his character really is."

"The request is a very singular one, considering to whom it is addressed," said Miss Cartwright; "and besides, I really cannot perceive any reason in the world why I should be guilty of an indecorum in order to do you *a great kindness.*"

"The indecorum, Miss Cartwright, has been already committed," said Rosalind. "You have already spoken of your father as you should not have spoken, unless you had some strong and virtuous motive for it.

"How exceedingly refreshing is the unwonted voice of truth!" exclaimed Henrietta.

"Rosalind Torrington, you are an honest girl, and will not betray me; for I do fear him — coward that I am—I do fear his cruelty, even while I despise his power. I think but lightly," she continued, "of the motes that people this paltry world of ours; yet there are gradations amongst us, from the pure-hearted kind fool, who, like you, Rosalind, would wish to spend their little hour of life in doing good, down to the plotting knave who, like my father, Miss Torrington, cares not what mischief he may do, so that his own unholy interest, and unholy joys, may be increased thereby: and so, look you, there are gradations also in my feelings towards them, from very light and easy indifference, down, down, down to the deepest abyss of hatred and contempt. I know not what power you may have here — not much, I should fear; for though you are rich, the Mowbrays are richer: yet it is possible, I think, that if the energy which I suspect makes part of your character be roused, you may obtain some influence. If you do, use it to keep Mr. Cartwright as far distant from all you love as you

can. Mistrust him yourself, and teach all others to mistrust him. — And now, never attempt to renew this conversation. I may have done you some service — do not let your imprudence make me repent it. Let us now avoid each other, if you please : I do not love talking, and would not willingly be led into it again."

Miss Cartwright left the room as soon as these words were spoken, leaving Rosalind in a state of mind extremely painful. Through all the strange wildness of Henrietta's manner she thought that she could trace a friendly intention to put her on her guard ; but she hardly knew what the mischief was which she feared, and less still perhaps what she could do to guard against it. The most obvious and the most desirable thing, if she could achieve it, was the preventing Mr. Cartwright's making the constant morning and evening visits which he threatened ; but she felt that her power was indeed small, and, such as it was, she knew not well how to use it.

Having remained for above an hour exactly in the place where Miss Cartwright had left

her, inventing and rejecting a variety of schemes for keeping Mr. Cartwright from the house during the absence of Mrs. Mowbray, she at length determined to write to him, and after a good deal of meditation produced the following note:

"Miss Torrington presents her compliments to Mr. Cartwright, and begs to inform him, that having been very strictly brought up by her father, a clergyman of the established church, she cannot, consistently with her ideas of what is right, continue to make her residence in a house where irregular and extempore prayer-meetings are held. She therefore takes this method of announcing to Mr. Cartwright, that if he perseveres in repeating at Mowbray Park the scene she witnessed this morning, she shall be obliged to leave the house of her guardian, and will put herself under the protection of Sir Gilbert Harrington till such time as Mrs. Mowbray shall return.

"Mowbray Park, 13th July, 1833."

This note she immediately despatched to the Vicarage by her own footman, who was ordered to wait for an answer, and in the course of an hour returned with the following short epistle :

"Mr. Cartwright presents his compliments to Miss Torrington, and respectfully requests permission to wait upon her for a few minutes to-morrow morning.

"Wrexhill Vicarage, July 13th, 1833."

Nothing could be less like the answer she expected than this note, and she might possibly have been doubtful whether to grantt he audience requested, or not, had she not perceived, with very considerable satisfaction, that she had already obtained a remission of the evening rhapsody he had threatened in the morning, which inspired her with reasonable hope that her remonstrance would not prove altogether in vain. She determined therefore to receive Mr. Cartwright on the morrow, but did not deem it necessary to send another express to say so, feeling pretty certain that the not

forbidding his approach would be quite sufficient to ensure its arrival.

The evening passed in very evident and very fidgety expectation on the part of Fanny, who more than once strolled out upon the lawn, returning with an air of restlessness and disappointment. But Rosalind was in excellent spirits, and contrived to amuse Miss Cartwright, and even elicit an expression of pleasure from her, by singing some of her sweetest native melodies, which she did with a delicacy and perfection of taste and feeling that few could listen to without delight.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN INTERVIEW. — THE LIME TREE. — ROSALIND'S LETTER TO MR. MOWBRAY.

At about eleven o'clock the following morning, Miss Torrington was informed that Mr. Cartwright requested to speak to her for a few minutes in the drawing-room. Henrietta was with her when the message was delivered, and seemed to await her reply with some curiosity.

"I will wait upon him immediately," was the civil and ready answer; and as Rosalind gave it, and at the same moment rose from her chair to obey the summons, she looked in the face of her companion to see if there were any wish expressed there that the silence so strictly enjoined should be broken. But Miss Cartwright was occupied by a volume of engrav-

ings which lay before her, and Rosalind left the room without having met her eye.

It is impossible to imagine a demeanour or address more perfectly gentlemanlike and respectful than those of Mr. Cartwright as he walked across the room to receive Miss Torrington. Strong as her feelings were against him, this still produced some effect; and as she seated herself and motioned to him to do the same, her mental soliloquy amounted to this:—"At any rate, I will listen patiently to what he has to say."

"I have taken the liberty of requesting to speak to you, Miss Torrington, because I feel persuaded that my conduct and principles have from some accident been misunderstood; and I cannot but hope that it may be in my power to explain them, so as in some degree to remove the prejudice which I fear you have conceived against me."

"It is my duty, sir, both as a matter of courtesy and justice, to hear whatever you wish to say in justification or excuse of the scene I witnessed yesterday morning. Miss

Fanny Mowbray is not yet recovered from the effects of the agitation into which she was thrown by it; and I have no objection, Mr. Cartwright, to repeat to you in person my fixed determination not to continue in the house if that scene be repeated."

"It is impossible," replied Mr. Cartwright "to find a lady of your age so steadfast in adhering to what she believes to be right, without feeling both admiration and respect for her; and I should think—forgive me if I wound you—I should think that such an one cannot altogether condemn the offering of prayer and thanksgiving to God?"

"Mr. Cartwright," replied Rosalind, her colour rising, and her voice expressive of great agitation, "you talk of having been misunderstood; but it is I, sir, who have reason to make this complaint. From which of my words, either written or spoken, do you presume to infer that I contemn the offering of prayer and thanksgiving to God?"

"I beseech you to bear with me patiently," said Mr. Cartwright with a look and tone

of the most touching mildness; "and be assured that by doing so, we shall not only be more likely to make ourselves mutually understood, but finally to arrive at that truth which, I am willing to believe, is equally the object of both. And the theme, my dear young lady, on which we speak should never be alluded to,—at least, I think not,—with any mixture of temper."

Poor Rosalind! Honest as her vehemence was, she felt that she had been wrong to show it, and with an effort that did her honour she contrived to say, "You are quite right, sir. As far as manner is concerned, you have greatly the advantage of me by your self-possession and calmness. Herein I will endeavour to imitate you, and assure you, with a *sang froid* as perfect as your own, that I consider the offering of prayer and thanksgiving to God as the first duty of a Christian. It is in consequence of the reverence in which I hold this sacred duty, that I shrink from seeing it performed irreverently. I have been taught to believe, sir, that the deepest learning, the

most deliberative wisdom, and the most grave and solemn meditation given to the subject by the fathers and founders of our church, were not too much to bestow on the sublime and awful attempt to address ourselves suitably to God in prayer. Prayers so framed, and fitted for every exigency that human nature can know, have been prepared for us with equal piety and wisdom; and while such exist, I will never join in any crude, unweighed, unauthorised jargon addressed to the Deity, however vehement the assumption of piety may be in the bold man who uses it."

"It is seldom that so young a lady," replied the vicar with a kind and gentle smile, "can have found time to give this important question so much attention as you appear to have done. Yet, perhaps,—yet, perhaps, Miss Torrington, when a few years more of deep consideration have been given by you to the subject, you may be led to think that fervour of feeling may more than atone for imperfection in expression."

"If you imagine, sir," replied Rosalind, in a

voice as tranquil and deliberate as his own, "that I have dared to regulate my conduct and opinions on such a point as this by any wisdom of my own, you do me great injustice. Such conduct, if general, would make as many churches upon earth as there are audacious spirits who reject control. My father, Mr. Cartwright, was one whose life was passed in the situation which, perhaps, beyond all others in the world, taught him the value of the establishment to which he belonged. To those of another and an adverse faith he was a kind friend and generous benefactor; but he could not be insensible, nor did he leave me so, of the superior purity and moral efficacy of his own; —and I hope not to live long enough to forget the reverence which he has left impressed upon my mind for all that our church holds sacred."

"Not for worlds, my excellent young lady," exclaimed Mr. Cartwright with warmth, "would I attempt to shake opinions so evidently sustained by a sense of duty! Respect for such will assuredly prevent my again at-

tempting to perform the office which offended your opinions this morning, as long as you continue, what you certainly ought to be at this time, the mistress of this family. I will only ask, Miss Torrington, in return for the sincere veneration I feel for your conscientious scruples, that you will judge me with equal candour, and will believe that however we may differ in judgment, I am not less anxious to be right than yourself."

Rosalind answered this appeal by a silent bow.

"May I, then, hope that we are friends?" said he, rising and presenting his hand; "and that I may venture to call, as I promised Mrs. Mowbray I would do, on yourself, Miss Fanny, and my daughter, without driving you from the house?"

"Certainly, sir," was Rosalind's cold reply. The request appeared as reasonable in itself, as it was politely and respectfully made, and to refuse it would have been equally churlish, presumptuous and unjust. Nevertheless, there was something at the bottom of her heart that

revolted against the act of shaking hands with him; and feigning to be occupied by arranging some flowers on the table, she suffered the offered hand to remain extended, till at length its patient owner withdrew it.

Though well pleased that her remonstrance had put a stop to the vicar's extempore prayings at the house, Rosalind was not altogether satisfied by the result of the interview. "We are still upon infinitely too civil terms," thought she; "but I see that just at present it would be an Herculean labour to quarrel with him:—if I smite him on one cheek, he will turn himself about as unresistingly as a sucking pig upon the spit, and submit to be basted all round without uttering a single squeak. But when Mrs. Mowbray returns, I suspect that it will be my turn to be basted:—*n'importe*—I am sure I have done no more than my father would have thought right."

With this consolation she returned to her dressing-room and applied herself to her usual occupations. Henrietta was no longer there; but as the fashion of the house was for every

one to find employment and amusement for themselves during the morning, she did not think it necessary to pursue her in order to prove her wish to be agreeable.

At luncheon the three young ladies met as usual in the dining-room: Fanny appeared to have recovered her spirits and good-humour, and Henrietta seemed to wish to be more conversable than usual. They then strolled into the gardens, visited the hothouses, and finally placed themselves in a shady and fragrant bower, where they discoursed of poetry and music for an hour or two.

When these subjects seemed to be well-nigh exhausted, Miss Cartwright rose and slowly walked towards the house without intimating to her companions what it was her purpose to do next.

Rosalind and Fanny being thus left tête-à-tête, the former said, "What do you think of our new acquaintance, Fanny?—How do you like Miss Cartwright?"

"I do not think she seems at all an amiable girl," replied Fanny. "With such advantages

as she has, it is quite astonishing that her manners are so little agreeable."

"She is not remarkably conversable, certainly," said Rosalind; "but I suspect that she has very bad health. How dreadfully sallow she is!"

"I suspect that she has a worse infirmity than bad health," answered Fanny;—"she has, I fear, an extremely bad temper."

"She has not a violent temper, at any rate," observed Rosalind; "for I never remember to have seen any one who gave me a greater idea of being subdued and spirit-broken."

"That is not at all the impression she makes upon me," said Fanny: "I should call her rather sullen than gentle, and obstinate instead of subdued. But this gossiping is sad idle work, Rosalind: as Miss Henrietta has fortunately taken herself off, I may go on with what I was doing before luncheon."

* * * * *

Late in the evening, Mr. Cartwright and his son Jacob paid the young ladies a visit. The vicar's conversation was chiefly addressed to

Miss Torrington; and if she had never seen him before, she must have agreed with Fanny in thinking him one of the most agreeable persons in the world,—for he spoke fluently and well upon every subject, and with a person and voice calculated to please every eye and every ear. There were probably, indeed, but few who could retain as steady a dislike to him as our Rosalind did.

The young man got hold of a purse that Fanny was netting, and did his best to entangle her silks; but his chief amusement was derived from attempts to quiz and plague his sister, who treated him much as a large and powerful dog does a little one,—enduring his gambols and annoying tricks with imperturbable patience for a while, and then suddenly putting forth a heavy paw and driving him off in an instant.

The following day passed very nearly in the same manner,—excepting that the three girls separated immediately after breakfast, and did not meet again till luncheon-time. On the third, Fanny was the first to leave the break-

fast-room; and Miss Cartwright and Rosalind being left together, the former said,

"I suppose we owe our repose from morning and evening ranting to you, Miss Torrington?"

"I certainly did not approve it, Miss Cartwright, and I took the liberty of telling your father so."

"You were undoubtedly very right and very wise, and I dare say you feel some inward satisfaction at your success. Mr. Cartwright has really shown great deference to your opinion, by so immediately abandoning, at your request, so very favourite an occupation."

Rosalind was about to reply, when Miss Cartwright changed the conversation by abruptly saying,

"Will you take a stroll with me this morning, Miss Torrington?"

"Yes, certainly, if you wish it; — but I think we shall find it very warm."

"Oh! no. I will lead you a very nice shady walk to the prettiest and most sheltered

little thicket in the world. Let us put on our bonnets directly;—shall we?"

"I will not delay you a moment," said Rosalind. "Shall I ask Fanny to go with us?"

"Why, no," replied Miss Cartwright; "I think you had better not;—the chances are ten to one against her finding it convenient. You know she is so fond of solitary study——"

"I believe you are right," said Rosalind; and the young ladies parted, to meet again a few minutes after, with bonnets and parasols, at the hall-door.

"And which way are we to go to find this welcome shade?" said Rosalind, holding her parasol low down to shelter her pretty face. "The sun is almost intolerable."

"This way," said Henrietta, turning aside from the drive in a direction which soon brought them to a thickly-planted ride that surrounded the Park. "We shall find it delightful here."

It was an hour which, in the month of July,

few ladies would choose for walking; but Miss Torrington politely exerted herself to converse, though she secretly longed to be lying silent and alone on the sofa in her own dressing-room, with no greater exertion than was necessary for the perusal of—

"The dear pages of some new romance."

Henrietta, however, only answered her dryly and shortly, and presently said,

"I should be really very much obliged to you, Miss Torrington, if you would not speak to me any more. Just listen to the blackbirds, will you?—depend upon it we can neither of us express ourselves one half so well as they do."

Rosalind willingly submitted to this request; and the young ladies walked onward, producing no other sound than the occasional brushing of their dresses against the underwood, which at every step became thicker, rendering the path almost too narrow for two to walk abreast.

"Now, let us just turn down through this

little opening," said Henrietta in a whisper; "and pray, do not speak to me."

Rosalind, who began to believe that she must have some meaning for her strange manner of proceeding, followed her in perfect silence; and they had not gone far into the intricacies of the tangled copse, before she heard the sound of a human voice at no great distance from her. Henrietta, who was in advance, turned round and laid her finger on her lips. The caution was not needed: Rosalind had already recognised the tones of Mr. Cartwright, and a few more silent steps brought them to a spot thickly surrounded on all sides, but from whence they could look out upon a small and beautiful opening, in the centre of which a majestic lime-tree stretched its arms, in all directions over the soft green turf.

Rosalind instantly recognised the spot as one frequently resorted to in their evening rambles, for the sake of its cool and secluded beauty, and also because a bench, divided into commodious stalls, surrounded the capacious

Drawn and Etched by A. J. Cervieu.

tree, from whence opened a vista commanding a charming view across the Park.

On the turf before this bench, and with their backs turned towards the spot where Rosalind and Henrietta stood, knelt Mr. Cartwright and Fanny. His eyes were fixed upon her with passionate admiration, and the first words they distinctly heard were these, spoken with great vehemence by the vicar:—

"Persecuted—trampled on—turned forth from every other roof, O Lord! let thy blue vault spread over us, and while I struggle to snatch this precious brand from the eternal fire of thy wrath, pour upon our heads the dew of thy love! Grant me power, O Lord! to save this one dear soul alive, though it should seem good in thy sight that millions should perish round her! Save her, O Lord!—save her from the eternal flame that even now rises to lick her feet, and if not stayed by prayer—the prayer of thy saints, O Lord!—will speedily envelope and consume her!"

Rosalind remained to hear no more. Heart-sick, indignant, disgusted, and almost terrified

by what she saw and heard, she retreated hastily, and, followed by Henrietta, rapidly pursued her way to the house.

Her companion made an effort to overtake her, and, almost out of breath by an exertion to which she was hardly equal, she said,

"I have shown you this, Miss Torrington, for the sake of giving you a useful lesson. If you are wise, you will profit by it, and learn to know that it is not always safe to suppose you have produced an effect, merely because it may be worth some one's while to persuade you into believing it. Having said thus much to point the moral of our walk in the sun, you may go your way, and I will go mine. I shall not enter upon any more elaborate exposition of Mr. Cartwright's character."

So saying, she fell back among the bushes, and Rosalind reached the house alone.

On entering her dressing-room, Miss Torrington sat herself down, with her eau de Cologne bottle in one hand and a large feather fan in the other, to meditate — coolly, if she could, but at any rate to meditate—upon what

she ought to do in order immediately to put a stop to the very objectionable influence which Mr. Cartwright appeared to exercise over the mind of Fanny.

Had she been aware of Sir Gilbert Harrington's having written to recal his refusal of the executorship, she would immediately have had recourse to him; but this fact had never transpired beyond Mrs. Mowbray and the vicar; and the idea that he had resisted the representation which she felt sure his son had made to him after the conversation Helen and herself had held with him, not only made her too angry to attempt any farther to soften him, but naturally impressed her with the belief that, do or say what she would on the subject, it must be in vain.

At length it struck her that Charles Mowbray was the most proper person to whom she could address herself; yet the writing such a letter as might immediately bring him home, was a measure which, under all existing circumstances, she felt to be awkward and disagreeable. But the more she meditated, the

more she felt convinced, that, notwithstanding the obvious objections to it, this was the safest course she could pursue: so, having once made up her mind upon the subject, she set about it without farther delay, and, with the straightforward frankness and sincerity of her character, produced the following epistle:—

"Dear Mr. Mowbray,

"Your last letter to Helen, giving so very agreeable an account of the style and manner of your *Little-go*, makes it an ungracious task to interrupt your studies — and yet that is what I am bent upon doing. You will be rather puzzled, I suspect, at finding me assuming the rights and privileges of a correspondent, and moreover of an adviser, or rather a dictator: but so it is—and you must not blame me till you are quite sure you know all my reasons for it.

"Mrs. Mowbray is gone to London, accompanied by Helen, for the purpose of proving (I think it is called) your father's will; a business in which Sir Gilbert Harrington has, most

unkindly for all of you, refused to join her. This journey was so suddenly decided upon, that dear Helen had no time to write to you about it: she knew not she was to go till about nine o'clock the evening preceding.

"The Vicar of Wrexhill was probably acquainted with the intended movement earlier; for no day passes, or has passed for some weeks, without his holding a private consultation with your mother.

"Oh! that vicar, Charles! I think I told you that I hated him, and you seemed to smile at my hatred as a sort of missish impertinence and caprice; but what was instinct then has become reason now, and I am strangely mistaken if your hatred would not fully keep pace with mine had you seen and heard what I have done.

"When I decided upon writing to you, I intended, I believe, to enter into all particulars; but I cannot do this — you must see for yourself, and draw your own inferences. My dislike for this man may carry me too far, and you must be much more capable of forming a

judgment respecting his motives than I can be. Of this however I am quite sure,—Fanny ought at this time to have some one near her more capable of protecting her from the mischievous influence of this hateful man than I am. I know, Mr. Charles, that you have no very exalted idea of my wisdom; and I am not without some fear that instead of coming home immediately, as I think you ought to do, you may write me a very witty, clever answer, with reasons as plenty as blackberries to prove that I am a goose. *Do not do this, Mr. Mowbray.* I do not think that you know me very well, but in common courtesy you ought not to believe that any young lady would write you such a summons as this without having very serious reasons for it.

"As one proof of the rapidly-increasing intimacy between the family of the vicar and your own, you will, on your arrival, find the daughter, Miss Cartwright, established here to console us for your mother's (and Helen's!) absence. She is a very singular personage: but on her I pass no judgment, sincerely feeling

that I am not competent to it. If my opinion be of sufficient weight to induce you to come, Mr. Mowbray, I must beg you to let your arrival appear the result of accident; and not to let any one but Helen know of this letter.

"Believe me, very sincerely,

"Your friend,

"ROSALIND TORRINGTON."

CHAPTER XV.

ROSALIND'S CONVERSATION WITH MISS CARTWRIGHT.—MRS. SIMPSON AND MISS RICHARDS MEET THE VICAR AT THE PARK.—THE HYMN.—THE WALK HOME.

In the course of the morning after this letter was despatched, Miss Cartwright and Rosalind again found themselves tête-à-tête. The nature of Rosalind Torrington was so very completely the reverse of mysterious or intriguing, that far from wishing to lead Henrietta to talk of her father in that style of hints and innuendos to which the young lady seemed addicted, she determined, in future, carefully to avoid the subject; although it was very evident from the preconcerted walk to the lime-tree, that, notwithstanding her declaration to the contrary, Miss Cartwright was desirous to make her acquainted with the character and conduct of her father.

Whether it were that spirit of contradiction which is said to possess the breast of woman, or any other more respectable feeling, it may be difficult to decide, but it is certain that the less Rosalind appeared disposed to speak of the adventure of yesterday, the more desirous did Henrietta feel to lead her to it.

"You were somewhat disappointed, I fancy, Miss Torrington," said she, "to discover that though you had contrived to banish the conventicle from the house, it had raised its voice in the grounds."

"Indeed I was," replied Rosalind.

"I rather think that you are addicted to speaking truth, — and perhaps you pique yourself upon it," resumed Miss Cartwright. "Will you venture to tell me what you think of the scene you witnessed?"

"You are not the person I should most naturally have selected as the confidant of my opinions respecting Mr. Cartwright," said Rosalind; "but since you put the question plainly, I will answer it plainly, and confess that I suspect him not only of wishing to inculcate

his own Calvinistic doctrines on the mind of Fanny Mowbray, but moreover, notwithstanding his disproportionate age, of gaining her affections."

"Her affections?" repeated Henrietta. "And with what view do you imagine he is endeavouring to gain her affections?"

"Doubtless with a view to making her his wife; though, to be sure, the idea is preposterous."

"Sufficiently. Pray, Miss Torrington, has Miss Fanny Mowbray an independent fortune?"

"None whatever. Like the rest of the family, she is become by the death of her father entirely dependent upon Mrs. Mowbray."

"Your fortune is entirely at your own disposal, I believe."

Rosalind looked provoked at the idle turn Miss Cartwright was giving to a conversation which, though she had not led to it, interested her deeply?

"Do not suspect me of impertinence," said

Henrietta in a tone more gentle than ordinary. "But such is the case, is it not?"

"Yes, Miss Cartwright," was Rosalind's grave reply.

"Then, do you know that I think it infinitely more probable Mr. Cartwright may have it in contemplation to make you his wife."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Cartwright," said Rosalind, "but I really thought that you were speaking of your father seriously; and it seems you are disposed to punish me for imagining you would do so, to one so nearly a stranger."

"I never jest on any subject," replied the melancholy-looking girl, knitting her dark brows into a frown of such austerity as almost made Rosalind tremble. "A reasoning being who has nothing to hope among the realities on this side the grave, and hopes nothing among the visions on the other, is not very likely to be jocose."

"Good God! Miss Cartwright," exclaimed Rosalind, "what dreadful language is this? Are you determined to prove to me that there

may be opinions and doctrines more terrible still than those of your father?"

"I had no meaning of the kind, I assure you," replied Henrietta, in her usual quiet manner, which always seemed to hover between the bitterness of a sneer, and the quietude or indifference of philosophy. "Pray do not trouble yourself for a moment to think about me or my opinions. You might, perhaps, as you are a bold-spirited, honest-minded girl, do some good if you fully comprehended all that was going on around you; though it is very doubtful, for it is impossible to say to what extent the besotted folly of people may go. But don't you think it might on the whole be quite as probable that Mr. Cartwright may wish to marry the mother, as the daughter?"

"Mrs. Mowbray!—Good gracious! no."

"Then we differ. But may I ask you why you think otherwise?"

"One reason is, that Mrs. Mowbray's recent widowhood seems to put such an idea entirely out of the question; and another, that he appears to be positively making love to Fanny."

"Oh! — is that all? I do assure you there is nothing at all particular in that. He would tell you himself, I am sure, if you were to enter upon the subject with him, that it is his duty to influence and lead the hearts of his flock into the way he would have them go, by *every* means in his power."

"Then you really do not think he has been making love to Fanny?"

"I am sure, Miss Torrington," replied Henrietta very gravely, "I did not mean to say so."

"Indeed! indeed! Miss Cartwright," said Rosalind with evident symptoms of impatience, these riddles vex me cruelly. "If your father *does* make love to this dear fanciful child, he must, I suppose, have some hope that she will marry him?"

"How can I answer you?" exclaimed Henrietta with real feeling. "You cannot be above two or three years younger than I am, yet your purity and innocence make me feel myself a monster."

"For God's sake do not trifle with me!"

cried Rosalind, her face and neck dyed with indignant blood; "you surely do not mean that your father is seeking to seduce this unhappy child?"

"Watch Mr. Cartwright a little while, Rosalind Torrington, as I have done for the six last terrible years of my hateful life, and you may obtain perhaps some faint idea of the crooked, complex machinery—the movements and counter-movements, the shiftings and the balancings, by which his zig-zag course is regulated. Human passions are in him for ever struggling with, and combating, what may be called in their strength, *superhuman* avarice and ambition.

"To touch, to influence, to lead, to rule, to tyrannise over the hearts and souls of all he approaches, is the great object of his life. He would willingly do this in the hearts of men, —but for the most part he has found them tough; and he now, I think, seems to rest all his hopes of fame, wealth, and station on the power he can obtain over women.—I say not,"

she added after a pause, while a slight blush passed over her pallid cheek, " that I believe his senses uninfluenced by beauty;—this is far, hatefully far from being the case with Mr. Cartwright;—but he is careful, most cunningly careful, whatever victims he make, never to become one in his own person.

" You would find, were you to watch him, that his system, both for pleasure and profit, consists of a certain graduated love-making to every woman within his reach, not too poor, too old, or too ugly. But if any among them fancy that he would sacrifice the thousandth part of a hair's breadth of his worldly hopes for all they could give him in return—they are mistaken."

" The character you paint," said Rosalind, who grew pale as she listened, " is too terrible for me fully to understand, and I would turn my eyes from the portrait, and endeavour to forget that I had ever heard of it, were not those I love endangered by it. Hateful as all this new knowledge is to me, I must still ques-

tion you further, Miss Cartwright: What do you suppose to be his object in thus working upon the mind of Fanny Mowbray?"

"His motives, depend upon it, are manifold. Religion and love, the new birth and intellectual attachment—mystical sympathy of hearts, and the certainty of eternal damnation to all that he does not take under the shadow of his wing;—these are the tools with which he works. He has got his foot—perhaps you may think it a cloven one, but, such as it is, he seems to have got it pretty firmly planted within the paling of Mowbray Park. He made me follow him hither as a volunteer visiter, very much against my inclination; but if by what I have said you may be enabled to defeat any of his various projects among ye,—for he never plots single-handed,—I shall cease to regret that I came."

"My power of doing any good," replied Rosalind, "must, I fear, be altogether destroyed by my ignorance of what Mr. Cartwright's intentions and expectations are. You have hinted various things, but all so vaguely, that I own

I do not feel more capable of keeping my friends from any danger which may threaten them, than before this conversation took place."

"I am sorry for it," said Henrietta coldly, "but I have really no information more accurate to give."

"I truly believe that you have meant very kindly," said Rosalind, looking seriously distressed. "Will you go one step farther, and say what you would advise me to do, Miss Cartwright?"

"No, certainly, Miss Torrington, I will not. But I will give you a hint or two what not to do. Do not appear at all better acquainted with me than I show myself disposed to be with you. Do not make the slightest alteration in your manner of receiving Mr. Cartwright; and do not, from any motive whatever, repeat one syllable of this conversation to Fanny Mowbray. Should you disobey this last injunction, you will be guilty of very cruel and ungrateful treachery towards me." Having said this, with the appearance of more emotion

than she had hitherto manifested, Henrietta rose and left the room.

"At length," thought Rosalind, "she has spoken out; yet what are we likely to be the better for it? It seems that there is a great net thrown over us, of which we shall feel and see the meshes by-and-by, when he who has made prey of us begins to pull the draught to shore; but how to escape from it, the oracle sayeth not!"

* * * * *

On the evening of that day, Mrs. Simpson and the eldest Miss Richards walked over from Wrexhill to pay a visit at the Park. They were not aware of the absence of Mrs. Mowbray, and seemed disposed to shorten their visit on finding she was not at home; but Rosalind, who for the last hour had been sitting on thorns expecting Mr. Cartwright to make his evening call, most cordially and earnestly invited them to stay till after tea, feeling that their presence would greatly relieve the embarrassment which she feared she might betray on again seeing the vicar

"But it will be so late!" said Mrs. Richards. "How are we to get home after it is dark? Remember, Mrs. Simpson, there is no moon."

"It is very true," said Mrs. Simpson. "I am afraid, my dear Miss Torrington, that we must deny ourselves the pleasure you offer;—but I am such a nervous creature! It is very seldom that I stir out without ordering a man-servant to follow me; and I regret excessively that I omitted to do so this evening."

"I think," said Rosalind, colouring at her own eagerness, which she was conscious must appear rather new and rather strange to Mrs. Simpson, with whom she had hardly ever exchanged a dozen words before,—"I think Mr. Cartwright will very likely be here this evening, and perhaps he might attend you home. Do you not think, Miss Cartwright," she added, turning to Henrietta, "that it is very likely your father will call this evening?"

"Good gracious!—Miss Cartwright—I beg your pardon, I did not know you. I hope you heard that I called;—so very happy to cultivate your acquaintance!—Oh

dear! I would not miss seeing Mr. Cartwright for the world! — Thank you, my dear Miss Torrington; — thank you, Miss Fanny: I will just set my hair to rights a little, if you will give me leave. Perhaps, Miss Fanny, you will permit me to go into your bed-room?" Such was the effect produced by the vicar's name upon the handsome widow.

Miss Richards coloured, smiled, spoke to Henrietta with very respectful politeness, and finally followed her friend Mrs. Simpson out of the room, accompanied by Fanny, who willingly undertook to be their gentlewoman usher.

"Mr. Cartwright has already made some impression on these fair ladies, or I am greatly mistaken," said Henrietta. "Did you remark, Miss Torrington, the effect produced by his name?"

"I did," replied Rosalind, "and my reasonings upon it are very consolatory; for if he has already found time and inclination to produce so great effect there, why should we fear

that his labours of love here should prove more dangerous in their tendency ?"

" Very true. Nor do I see any reason in the world why the Mowbray is in greater peril than the Simpson, or the Fanny than the Louisa, — excepting that one widow is about twenty times richer than the other, and the little young lady about five hundred times handsomer than the great one."

At this moment the Mr. Cartwrights, father and son, were seen turning off from the regular approach to the house, towards the little gate that opened from the lawn ; a friendly and familiar mode of entrance, which seemed to have become quite habitual to them.

Rosalind, who was the first to perceive them, flew towards the door, saying, " You must excuse me for running away, Miss Cartwright. I invited that furbelow widow to stay on purpose to spare me this almost tête-à-tête meeting. I will seek the ladies and return with them."

" Then so will I too," said Henrietta, hastily following her. " I am by no means

disposed to stand the cross-examination which I know will ensue if I remain here alone."

The consequence of this movement was, that the vicar and his son prepared their smiles in vain; for, on entering the drawing-room, sofas and ottomans, foot-stools, tables and chairs, alone greeted them.

Young Cartwright immediately began peeping into the work-boxes and portfolios which lay on the tables.

"Look here sir," said he, holding up a caricature of Lord B——m. "Is not this sinful?"

"Do be quiet, Jacob!—we shall have them here in a moment;—I really wish I could teach you when your interest is at stake to make the best of yourself. You know that I should be particularly pleased by your marrying Miss Torrington; and I do beg, my dear boy, that you will not suffer your childish spirits to put any difficulties in my way."

"I will become an example unto all men," replied Jacob, shutting up his eyes and mouth

demurely, and placing himself bolt upright upon the music-stool.

" If you and your sister could but mingle natures a little," said Mr. Cartwright, " you would both be wonderfully improved. Nothing with which I am acquainted, however joyous, can ever induce Henrietta to smile; and nothing, however sad, can prevent your being on the broad grin from morning to night. However, of the two, I confess I think you are the most endurable."

" A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back," said Jacob in a sanctified tone.

" Upon my honour, Jacob, I shall be very angry with you if you do not set about this love-making as I would have you. Don't make ducks and drakes of eighty thousand pounds: — at least, not till you have got them."

" Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit," said Jacob.

Mr. Cartwright smiled, as it seemed against his will, but shook his head very solemnly. "I 'll tell you what, Jacob," said he,—"if I see you set about this in a way to please me, I 'll give you five shillings to-morrow morning."

"Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?" replied Jacob. "Nevertheless, father, I will look lovingly upon the maiden, and receive thy promised gift, even as thou sayest."

"Upon my word, Jacob, you try my patience too severely," said the vicar; yet there was certainly but little wrath in his eye as he said so, and his chartered libertine of a son was preparing again to answer him in the words of Solomon, but in a spirit of very indecent buffoonery, when the drawing-room door opened, and Mrs. Simpson, Miss Richards, and Fanny Mowbray entered.

It appeared that Rosalind and Miss Cartwright on escaping from the drawing-room had not sought the other ladies, but taken refuge in the dining-parlour, from whence they

issued immediately after the others had passed the door, and entering the drawing-room with them, enjoyed the gratification of witnessing the meeting of the vicar and his fair parishioners.

To the surprise of Rosalind, and the great though silent amusement of her companion, they perceived that both the stranger ladies had contrived to make a very edifying and remarkable alteration in the general appearance of their dress.

Miss Richards had combed her abounding black curls as nearly straight as their nature would allow, and finally brought them into very reverential order by the aid of her ears, and sundry black pins to boot,—an arrangement by no means unfavourable to the display of her dark eyes and eyebrows.

But the change produced by the *castigato* toilet of the widow was considerably more important. A transparent blond *chemisette*, rather calculated to adorn than conceal that part of the person to which it belonged, was now completely hidden by a lavender-coloured silk

handkerchief, tightly, smoothly, and with careful security pinned behind, and before, and above, and below, upon her full but graceful bust.

Rosalind had more than once of late amused herself by looking over the pages of Moliere's "Tartufe;" and a passage now occurred to her that she could not resist muttering in the ear of Henrietta:—

"Ah, mon Dieu! je vous prie,
"Avant que de parler, prenez-moi ce mouchoir"—&c.

The corner of Miss Cartwright's mouth expressed her appreciation of the quotation, but by a movement so slight that none but Rosalind could perceive it.

Meanwhile the vicar approached Mrs. Simpson with a look that was full of meaning, and intended to express admiration both of her mental and personal endowments. She, too, had banished the drooping ringlets from her cheeks, and appeared before him with all the pretty severity of a Madonna band across her forehead.

Was it in the nature of man to witness such touching proofs of his influence without being affected thereby? At any rate, such indifference made no part of the character of the Vicar of Wrexhill, and the murmured "God bless you, my dear lady!" which accompanied his neighbourly pressure of the widow Simpson's hand, gave her to understand how much his grateful and affectionate feelings were gratified by her attention to the hints he had found an opportunity to give her during a tête-à-tête conversation at her own house a few days before.

Nor was the delicate attention of Miss Richards overlooked. She, too, felt at her fingers' ends how greatly the sacrifice of her curls was approved by the graceful vicar, who now, in all the beauty of holiness, sat down surrounded by this fair bevy of ladies, smiling with bland and gentle sweetness on them all.

Mr. Jacob thought of the promised five shillings, and displaying his fine teeth from ear to ear, presented a chair to Miss Torrington.

"I wish you would let us have a song,

Miss Rosalind Torrington," said he, stationing himself at the back of her chair and leaning over her shoulder. " I am told that your voice beats all the heavenly host hollow."

His eye caught an approving glance from his father as he took this station, and he wisely trusted to his attitude for obtaining his reward, for these words were audible only to the young lady herself.

" You are a mighty odd set of people !" said she, turning round to him. " I cannot imagine how you all contrive to live together ! There is not one of you that does not appear to be a contrast to the other two."

" Then, at any rate, you cannot dislike us all *equally*," said the strange lad, with a grimace that made her laugh, despite her inclination to look grave.

" I do not know that," was the reply. " I may dislike you all equally, and yet have a different species of dislike for each."

" But one species must be stronger and more vigorous than the others. Besides, I will assist your judgment. I do not mean to say I

am quite perfect ; but, depend upon it, I 'm the best of the *set*, as you call us."

" Your authority, Mr. Jacob, is the best in the world, certainly. Nevertheless, there are many who on such an occasion might suspect you of partiality."

" Then they would do me great injustice, Miss Torrington. I am a man, or a boy, or something between both : take me for all in all, it is five hundred to one you ne'er shall look upon my like again. But that is a play-going and sinful quotation, Miss Rosalind, like your name : so be gracious and merciful unto me, and please not to tell my papa."

" You may be very certain, Mr. Jacob, that I shall obey you in this."

" Sweetest nut hath sourest rind,—
Such a nut is Rosalind,"

responded the youth ; and probably thinking that he had fairly won his five shillings, he raised his tall thin person from the position which had so well pleased his father, and stole round to the sofa on which Fanny was sitting.

Fanny was looking very lovely, but without a trace of that bright and beaming animation which a few short months before had led her poor father to give her the *sobriquet* of "Fire-fly." He was wont to declare, and no one was inclined to contradict him, that whenever she appeared, something like a bright coruscation seemed to flash upon the eye. No one, not even a fond father, would have hit upon such a simile for her now. Beautiful she was, perhaps more beautiful than ever; but a sad and sombre thoughtfulness had settled itself on her young brow,—her voice was no longer the echo of gay thoughts, and, in a word, her whole aspect and bearing were changed.

She now sat silently apart from the company, watching, with an air that seemed to hover between abstraction and curiosity, Mrs. Simpson's manner of making herself agreeable to Mr. Cartwright.

This lady was seated on one side of the vicar, and Miss Richards on the other: both had the appearance of being unconscious that any other person or persons were in the room,

and nothing but his consummate skill in the art of uttering an aside both with eyes and lips could have enabled him to sustain his position.

" My sisters and I are afraid you have quite forgotten us," murmured Miss Richards; " but we have been practising the hymns you gave us, and we are all quite perfect, and ready to sing them to you whenever you come."

" The hearing this, my dear young lady, gives me as pure and holy a pleasure as listening to the sacred strains could do:—unless, indeed," he added, bending his head sideways towards her so as nearly to touch her cheek, " unless, indeed, they were breathed by the lips of Louisa herself. That must be very like hearing a seraph sing!"

Not a syllable of this was heard save by herself.

" I have thought incessantly," said Mrs. Simpson, in a very low voice, as soon as Mr. Cartwright's head had recovered the perpendicular, — " incessantly, I may truly say, on our last conversation. My life has been passed in

a manner so widely different from what I am sure it will be in future, that I feel as if I were awakened to a new existence!"

"The great object of my hopes is, and will will ever be," replied the Vicar of Wrexhill almost aloud, "to lead my beloved flock to sweet and safe pastures. — And for you," he added, in a voice so low that she rather felt than heard his words, "what is there I would not do?" Here his eyes spoke a commentary; and hers, a note upon it.

"Which is the hymn, Mr. Cartwright, that you think best adapted to the semi-weekly Sabbath you recommended us to institute?" said Miss Richards.

"The eleventh, I think.—Yes, the eleventh; —study that, my dear child. Early and late let your sweet voice breathe those words,— and I will be with you in spirit, Louisa."

Not even Mrs. Simpson heard a word of this, beyond "dear child."

"But when shall I see you? — I have doubts and difficulties on some points, Mr. Cartwright," said the widow aloud. "How

shamefully ignorant—I must call it *shamefully* ignorant—did poor Mr. Wallace suffer us to remain!—Is it not true, Louisa? Did he ever, through all the years we have known him, utter an awakening word to any of us?"

"No, *indeed* he never did," replied Miss Louisa in a sort of penitent whine.

"I am rather surprised to hear you say that, Miss Richards," said Rosalind, drawing her chair a little towards them. "I always understood that Mr. Wallace was one of the most exemplary parish priests in England. Did not your father consider him to be so, Fanny?"

"I — I believe so, — I don't know," rereplied Fanny, stammering and colouring painfully."

"Not know, Fanny Mowbray!" exclaimed Rosalind;—"not know your father's opinion of Mr. Wallace! That is very singular indeed."

"I mean," said Fanny, struggling to recover her composure, "that I never heard papa's opinion of him as compared with — with any one else."

"I do not believe he would have lost by the

comparison," said Rosalind, rising and walking out of the window.

"Is not that prodigiously rich young lady somewhat of the tiger breed?" said young Cartwright in a whisper to Fanny.

"Miss Torrington is not at all a person of serious notions," replied Fanny; "and till one is subdued by religion, one is often very quarrelsome."

"I am sure, serious or not, you would never quarrel with any one," whispered Jacob.

"Indeed I should be sorry and ashamed to do so now," she replied. "Your father ought to cure us all of such unchristian faults as that."

"I wish I was like my father!" said Jacob very sentimentally.

"Oh! how glad I am to hear you say that!" said Fanny, clasping her hands together. "I am sure it would make him so happy!"

"I can't say I was thinking of making him happy, Miss Fanny: I only meant that I wished I was like anybody that you admire and approve so much."

"A poor silly motive for wishing to be like

such a father!" replied Fanny, blushing; and leaving her distant place, she established herself at the table on which the tea equipage had just been placed, and busied herself with the tea-cups.

This remove brought her very nearly opposite Mr. Cartwright and the two ladies who were seated beside him, and from this moment the conversation proceeded without any "asides" whatever.

"At what age, Mr. Cartwright," said Mrs. Simpson, "do you think one should begin to instil the doctrine of regeneration into a little girl?"

"Not later than ten, my dear lady. A very quick and forward child might perhaps be led to comprehend it earlier. Eight and three-quarters I have known in a state of the most perfect awakening; but this I hold to be rare."

"What a spectacle!" exclaimed Miss Richards in a sort of rapture. "A child of eight and three-quarters filled with the Holy Spirit! Did it speak its thoughts, Mr. Cartwright?"

"The case I allude to, my dear young lady,

was published. I will bring you the pamphlet. Nothing can be more edifying than the outbreakings of the Spirit through the organs of that chosen little vessel."

"I hope, Mr. Cartwright, that *I* shall have the benefit of this dear pamphlet also. Do not forget that I have a little girl exactly eight years three-quarters and six weeks.—I beg your pardon, my dear Louisa, but this must be so much more interesting to me than it can be to you as yet, my dear, that I trust Mr. Cartwright will give me the precedence in point of time. Besides, you know, that as the principal person in the village, I am a little spoiled in such matters. I confess to you, I should feel hurt if I had to wait for this till you had studied it. You have no child, you know."

"Oh! without doubt, Mrs. Simpson, you ought to have it first," replied Miss Richards. "I am certainly not likely as yet to have any one's soul to be anxious about but my own.—Is this blessed child alive, Mr. Cartwright?"

"In heaven, Miss Louisa,—not on earth. It is the account of its last moments that have

been so admirably drawn up by the Reverend Josiah Martin. This gentleman is a particular friend of mine, and I am much interested in the sale of the little work. I will have the pleasure, my dear ladies, of bringing a dozen copies to each of you ; and you will give me a very pleasing proof of the pious feeling I so deeply rejoice to see, if you will dispose of them at one shilling each among your friends."

" I am sure I will try all I can !" said Miss Richards.

" My influence could not be better employed, I am certain, than in forwarding your wishes in all things," added Mrs. Simpson.

Young Jacob, either in the hope of amusement, or of more certainly securing his five shillings, had followed the indignant Rosalind out of the window, and found her refreshing herself by arranging the vagrant tendrils of a beautiful creeping plant outside it.

" I am afraid, Miss Rosalind Torrington," said he, " that you would not say Amen ! if I did say, May the saints have you in their holy keeping ! I do believe in my heart that

you would rather find yourself in the keeping of sinners."

"The meaning of words often depends upon the character of those who utter them," replied Rosalind. "There is such a thing as slang, Mr. Jacob; and there is such a thing as cant."

"Did you ever mention that to my papa, Miss Rosalind?" inquired Jacob in a voice of great simplicity.

Rosalind looked at him as if she wished to discover what he was at,—whether his object were to quiz her, his father, or both. But, considering his very boyish appearance and manner, there was more difficulty in achieving this than might have been expected. Sometimes she thought him almost a fool; at others, quite a wag. At one moment she was ready to believe him more that commonly simple-minded; and at another, felt persuaded that he was an accomplished hypocrite.

It is probable that the youth perceived her purpose, and felt more gratification in defeating it than he could have done from any love-making of which she were the object. His

countenance, which was certainly intended by nature to express little besides frolic and fun, was now puckered up into a look of solemnity that might have befitted one of the Newman-street congregation when awaiting an address in the unknown tongue.

"I am sure," he said, "that my papa would like to hear you talk about all those things very much, Miss Torrington. I do not think that he would exactly agree with you in every word you might say: but that never seems to vex him: if the talk does but go about heaven and hell, and saints and sinners, and reprobation and regeneration, and the old man and the new birth, that is all papa cares for. I think he likes to be contradicted a little; for that, you know, makes more talk again."

"Is that the principle upon which you proceed with him yourself, Mr. Jacob? Do you always make a point of contradicting everything he says?"

"Pretty generally, Miss Torrington, when there is nobody by, and when I make it all pass for joke. But there *is* a law that even Miss

Henrietta has been taught to obey; and that is, never to contradict him in company. Perhaps you have found that out, Miss Rosalind?"

"Perhaps I have, Mr. Jacob."

"Will you not come in to tea, Miss Torrington?" said Henrietta, appearing at the window, with the volume in her hand which had seemed to occupy her whole attention from the time she had re-entered the drawing-room with Rosalind.

"I wish, sister," said Jacob, affecting to look extremely cross, "that you would not pop out so, to interrupt one's conversation! You might have a fellow feeling, I think, for a young lady, when she walks out of a window, and a young gentleman walks after her!"

Rosalind gave him a look from one side, and Henrietta from the other.

"Mercy on me!" he exclaimed, putting up his hands as if to guard the two sides of his face. "Four black eyes at me at once! —and so very black in every sense of the word!"

The young ladies walked together into the room, and Jacob followed, seeking the eye of his father, and receiving thence, as he expected, a glance of encouragement and applause.

When the tea was removed, Mr. Cartwright went to the piano-forte, and ran his fingers with an appearance of some skill over the keys.

"I hope, my dear Miss Fanny, that you intend we should have a little music this evening?"

"If Mrs. Simpson, Miss Richards, and Miss Torrington will sing," said Fanny, "I shall be very happy to accompany them."

"What music have you got, my dear young lady?" said the vicar.

Miss Torrington had a large collection of songs very commodiously stowed beneath the instrument; and Helen and herself were nearly as amply provided with piano-forte music of all kinds: but though this was the first time Mr. Cartwright had ever approached the instrument, or asked for music, Fanny had a sort of instinctive consciousness that the collection would be found defective in his eyes.

"We have several of Handel's oratorios," she replied; "and I think Helen has got the 'Creation.'"

"Very fine music both," replied Mr. Cartwright; "but in the social meetings of friends, where many perhaps may be able to raise a timid note toward heaven, though incapable of performing the difficult compositions of these great masters, I conceive that a simpler style is preferable. If you will permit me," he continued, drawing a small volume of manuscript music from his pocket, "I will point out to you some very beautiful, and, indeed, popular melodies, which have heretofore been sadly disgraced by the words applied to them. In this little book many of my female friends, to whom God has seen fit for his own especial glory to give some sparks of poetic power, have, at my request, written words fit for a Christian to sing, to notes that the sweet voice of youth and beauty may love to breathe. Miss Torrington, I have heard that you are considered to be a very superior vocalist:—will you use the power that God has given, to hymn his praise?"

There was too much genuine piety in Rosalind's heart to refuse a challenge so worded, without a better reason for doing it than personal dislike to Mr. Cartwright; nevertheless, it was not without putting some constraint upon herself that she replied,

"I very often sing sacred music, sir, and am ready to do so now, if you wish it."

"A thousand thanks," said he, "for this amiable compliance! I hail it as the harbinger of harmony that shall rise from all our hearts in sweet accord to heaven."

Rosalind coloured, and her heart whispered, "I will not be a hypocrite." But she had agreed to sing, and she prepared to do so, seeking among her volumes for one of the easiest and shortest of Handel's songs, and determined when she had finished to make her escape.

While she was thus employed, however, Mr. Cartwright was equally active in turning over the leaves of his pocket companion; and before Miss Torrington had made her selection, he placed the tiny manuscript volume open upon the instrument, saying, "There, my dear young lady! this is an air and these are words

which we may all listen to with equal innocence and delight."

Rosalind was provoked; but every one in the room had already crowded round the piano, and having no inclination to enter upon any discussion, she sat down prepared to sing whatever was placed before her.

The air was undeniably a popular one, being no other than "Fly not yet!" which, as all the world knows, has been performed to millions of delighted listeners, in lofty halls and tiny drawing-rooms, and, moreover, ground upon every hand-organ in Great Britain for many years past. Rosalind ran her eyes over the words, which, in fair feminine characters, were written beneath the notes as follow:

Fly not yet! 'Tis just the hour
When prayerful Christians own the power
That, inly beaming with new light,
Begins to sanctify the night
For maids who love the moon.
Oh, pray!—oh, pray!

'Tis but to bless these hours of shade
That pious songs and hymns are made;
For now, their holy ardour glowing,
Sets the soul's emotion flowing.
Oh, pray!—oh, pray!

Prayer so seldom breathes a strain
So sweet as this, that, oh! 'tis pain
To check its voice too soon.
Oh, pray!—oh, pray!

An expression of almost awful indignation rose to the eyes of Rosalind. "Do you give me this, sir," she said, "as a jest?—or do you propose that I should sing it as an act of devotion towards God?"

Mr. Cartwright withdrew the little book and immediately returned it to his pocket.

"I am sorry, Miss Torrington, that you should have asked me such a question," he replied with a kind of gentle severity which might have led almost any hearer to think him in the right. "I had hoped that my ministry at Wrexhill, short as it has been, could not have left it a matter of doubt whether, in speaking of singing or prayer, I was in jest?"

"Nevertheless, sir," rejoined Rosalind, "it does to me appear like a jest, and a very indecent one too, thus to imagine that an air long familiar to all as the vehicle of words as full of levity as of poetry can be on the sudden converted into an accompaniment to a solemn

invocation to prayer—uttered, too, in the form of a vile parody."

"I think that a very few words may be able to prove to you the sophistry of such an argument," returned the vicar. "You will allow, I believe, that this air is very generally known to all classes.—Is it not so?"

Rosalind bowed her assent.

"Well, then, let me go a step farther, and ask whether the words originally set to this air are not likely to be recalled by hearing it."

"Beyond all doubt."

"Now observe, Miss Torrington, that what you have been pleased to call levity and poetry, I, in my clerical capacity, denounce as indecent and obscene."

"Is that your reason for setting me to play it?" said Rosalind in a tone of anger.

"That question, again, does not, I fear, argue an amiable and pious state of mind," replied Mr. Cartwright, appealing meekly with his eyes to the right and left. "It is to substitute other thoughts for those which the air has hitherto suggested that I conceive the singing this song, as it now stands, desirable."

"Might it not be as well to leave the air alone altogether?" said Rosalind.

"Decidedly not," replied the vicar. "The notes, as you have allowed, are already familiar to all men, and it is therefore a duty to endeavour to make that familiarity familiarly suggest thoughts of heaven."

"Thoughts of heaven," said Rosalind, "should never be suggested familiarly."

"Dreadful — very dreadful doctrine that, Miss Torrington! and I must tell you, in devout assurance of the truth I speak, that it is in order to combat and overthrow such notions as you now express, that God hath vouchsafed, by an act of his special providence, to send upon earth in these later days my humble self, and some others who think like me."

"And permit me, sir, in the name of the earthly father I have lost," replied Rosalind, while her eyes *almost* overflowed with the glistening moisture her earnestness brought into them,—"permit me in his reverenced name to say, that constant prayer to God can in no way be identified with familiarity of address; and

that of many lamentable evils which the class of preachers to whom you allude have brought upon blundering Christians, that of teaching them to believe that there is righteousness in mixing the awful and majestic name of God with all the hourly, petty occurrences of this mortal life, is one of the most deplorable."

"May your unthinking youth, my dear young lady, plead before the God of mercy in mitigation of the wrath which such sentiments are calculated to draw down!"

"Oh!" sobbed Miss Richards.

"Alas!" sighed Mrs. Simpson.

"How can you, Rosalind, speak so to the pastor and master of our souls?" said Fanny, while tears of sympathy for the outraged vicar fell from her beautiful eyes.

"My dear children!—my dear friends!" said Mr. Cartwright in a voice that seemed to tremble with affectionate emotion, "think not of me!—Remember the words 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake!' I turn not from the harsh rebuke of this young lady, albeit I am not insensible to its injustice,—nor, indeed, blind to its inde-

cency. But blessed—oh! most blessed shall I hold this trial, if it lead to the awakening holy thoughts in you!—My dear young lady," he continued, rising from his seat and approaching Rosalind with an extended hand, "it may be as well, perhaps, that I withdraw myself at this moment. Haply, reflection may soften your young heart.—But let us part in peace, as Christians should do."

Rosalind did not take his offered hand. "In peace, sir," she said,—"decidedly I desire you to depart in peace. I have no wish to molest you in any way. But you must excuse my not accepting your proffered hand. It is but an idle and unmeaning ceremony perhaps, as things go; but the manner in which you now stretch forth your hand gives a sort of importance to it which would make it a species of falsehood in me to accept it. When it means anything, it means cordial liking; and this, sir, I do not feel for you."

So saying, Rosalind arose and left the room.

Fanny clasped her hands in a perfect agony, and raising her tearful eyes to Heaven as if to deprecate its wrath upon the roof that covered

so great wickedness, exclaimed, " Oh, Mr. Cartwright ! what can I say to you !"

Mrs. Simpson showed symptoms of being likely to faint; and as Mr. Cartwright and Fanny approached her, Miss Richards, with a vehemence of feeling that seemed to set language at defiance, seized the hand of the persecuted vicar and pressed it to her lips.

Several minutes were given to the interchange of emotions too strong to be described in words. Female tears were blended with holy blessings; and, as Jacob afterwards assured his sister, who had contrived unobserved to escape, he at one time saw no fewer than eight human hands, great and small, all mixed together in a sort of chance-medley heap upon the chair round which they at length kneeled down to " speak the Lord" upon the scene that had just passed.

It will be easily believed that Miss Torrington appeared no more that night; and after an hour passed in conversation on the persecutions and revilings to which the godly are exposed, Mrs. Simpson, who declared herself dreadfully overcome, proposed to Miss Richards that they

should use such strength as was left them to walk home. A very tender leave was taken of Fanny, in which Mr. Jacob zealously joined, and the party set out for a star-lit walk to Wrexhill, its vicar supporting on each arm a very nervous and trembling hand.

Mr. Cartwright soon after passing the Park-lodge, desired his son to step forward and order the clerk to come to him on some urgent parish business before be went to bed. The young man darted forward nothing loth, and the trio walked at a leisurly pace under the dark shadows of the oak-trees that lined the road to the village.

They passed behind the Vicarage; when the two ladies simultaneously uttered a sigh, and breathed in a whisper, "Sweet spot!" Can it be doubted that both were thanked by a gentle pressure of the arm?

The house of Mrs. Simpson lay on the road to that of Mrs. Richards, and Miss Louisa made a decided halt before the door, distinctly pronouncing at the same time,

"Good night, my dear Mrs. Simpson!"

But this lady knew the duties of a chaperon

too well to think of leaving her young companion till she saw her safely restored to her mother's roof.

"Oh! no, my dear!" she exclaimed: "if your house were a mile off, Louisa, I should take you home."

"But you have been so poorly!" persisted the young lady, "and it is so unnecessary!"

"It is right," returned Mrs. Simpson with an emphasis that marked too conscientious a feeling to be further resisted. So Miss Richards was taken home, and the fair widow languidly and slowly retraced her steps to her own door, with no other companion than the Vicar of Wrexhill.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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